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THE NEW YORKER

OCT. 16 & 23, 2000

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THE NEW YORKER
THE POLITICS ISSUE

OCTOBER 16 & 23, 2000

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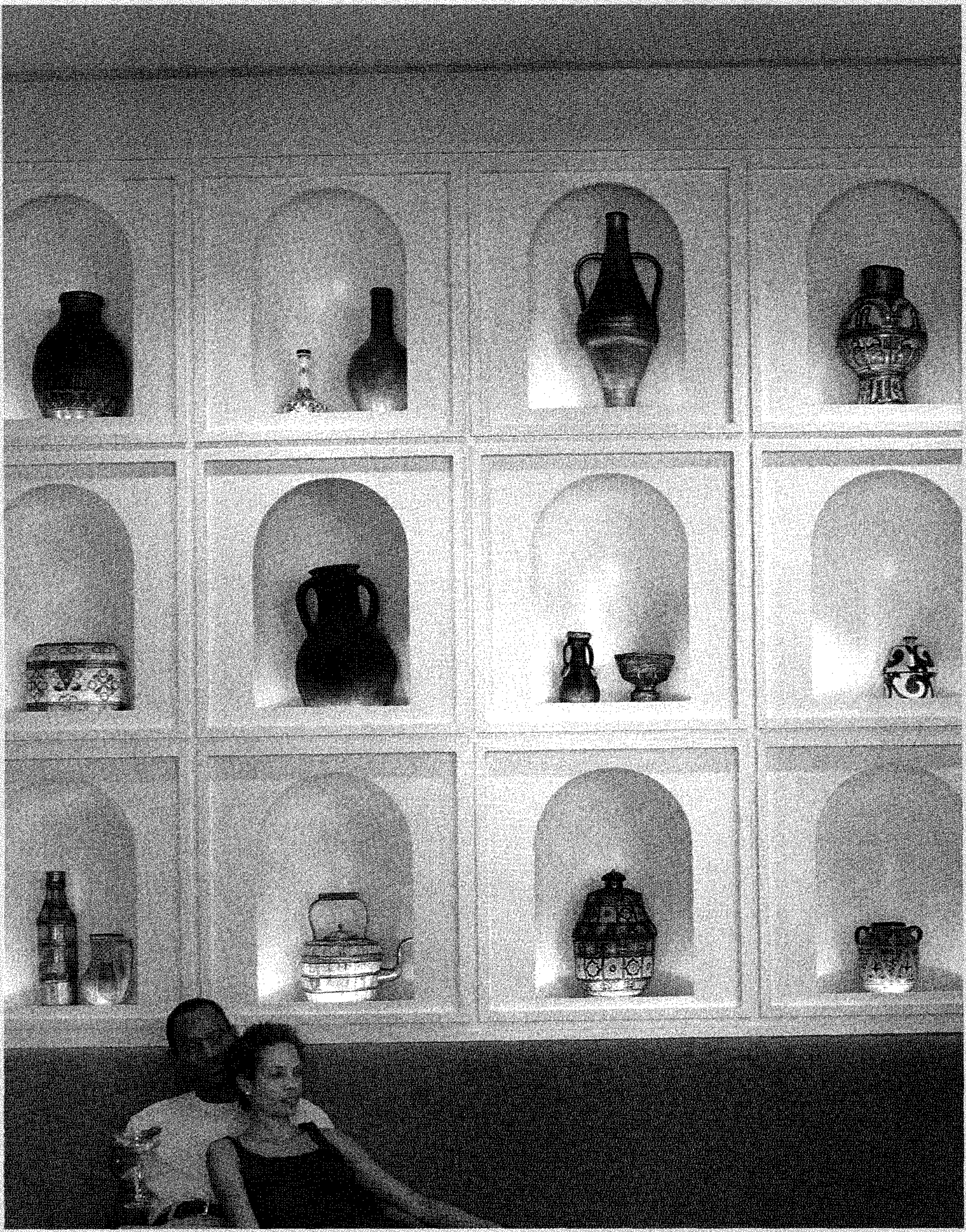
What's the best part about any trip? Pleasantly finding what you came for, or basking in the delight of an unexpected discovery? At Hyatt, we believe it's a combination of the two. Where what you hoped to find and what you never could have imagined blend effortlessly into one. Where ancient ruins share their stories, and the rhythms of a local culture stir your soul. It's a place that helps turn dreams into reality, and answer questions you didn't even know you had. For reservations, call Hyatt or your travel planner.



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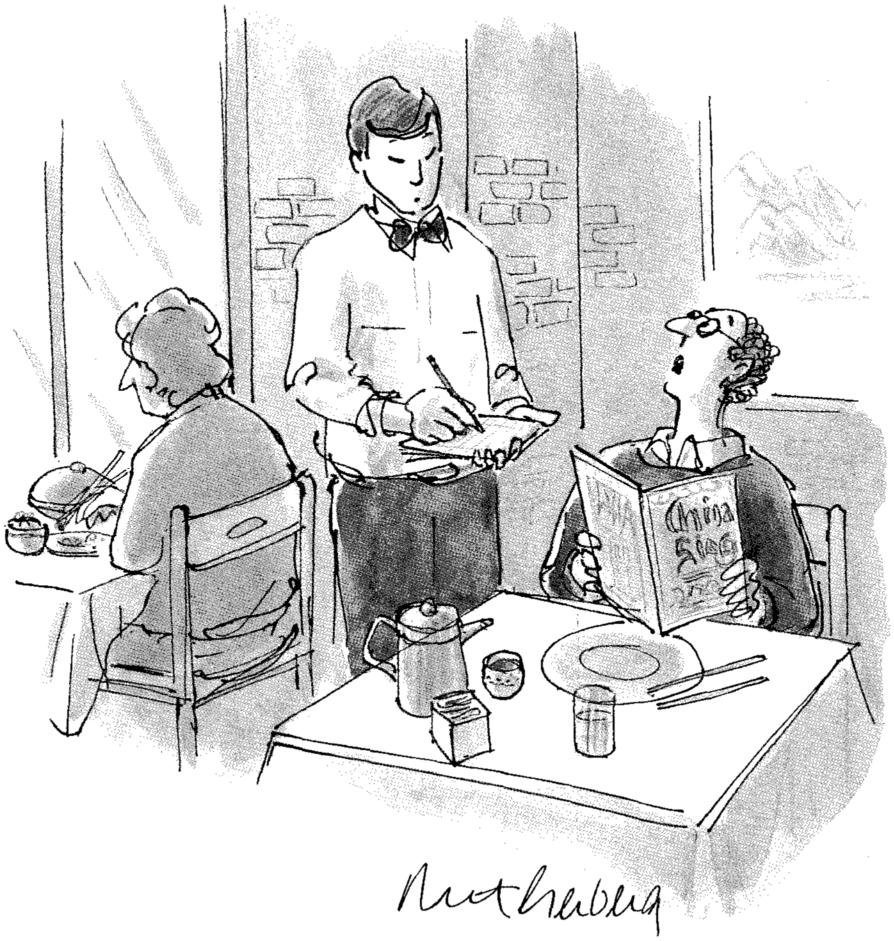


"What I'd like is different Presidential candidates, but I guess I'll just have the shrimp in garlic sauce."

CONTRIBUTORS

Joe Klein ("Eight Years," p. 188), the magazine's Washington correspondent, is the author of "Woody Guthrie: A Life" and "The Running Mate," a novel.

Amanda Smith ("Family History," p. 114) is the editor of "Hostage to Fortune: The Letters of Joseph P. Kennedy," which will be published in January.

Susan Orlean ("A Place Called Midland," p. 128) is the author of "The Orchid Thief" and of "The Bullfighter Checks Her Makeup," which comes out in January.

Elizabeth Kolbert ("The Inside Game," p. 146) is the New York political correspondent for the magazine.

Anita Kuntz (Cover) will have a retrospective of her work at the Society of Illustrators, in New York, this November.

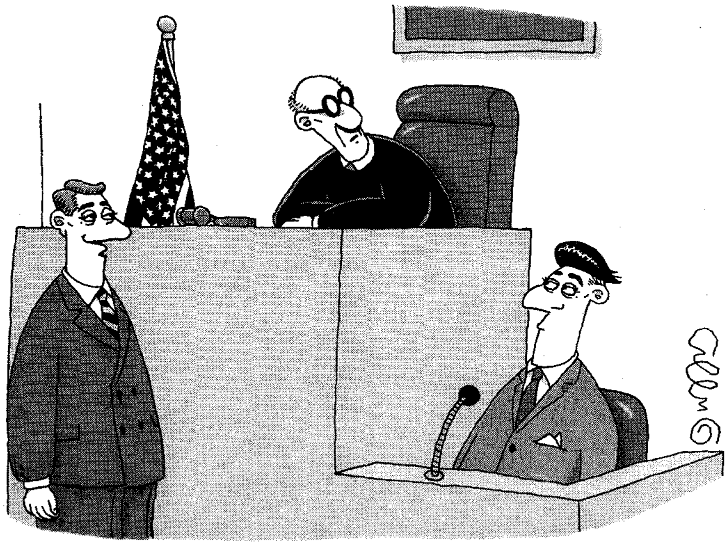
Nicholas Lemann ("The Word Lab," p. 100) has just published an E-book entitled "Sons," which consists of his *New Yorker* profiles of the two main Presidential candidates.

Gilles Peress (Portfolio, p. 218) won an Overseas Press Club award for a photo essay on Kosovo. His books include "Farewell to Bosnia," "The Silence," and "The Graves: Srebrenica and Vukovar."

Louis Menand (A Critic at Large, p. 236) is a staff writer. He has contributed to the magazine since 1991.

Maile Meloy (Fiction, p. 230) will publish a collection of short stories next year.

Paul Slansky (The Back Page, p. 262) is a television and film writer in Hollywood and the author of "The Clothes Have No Emperor." ♦



"Your Honor, I ask you—is this the toupee of a successful adulterer?"

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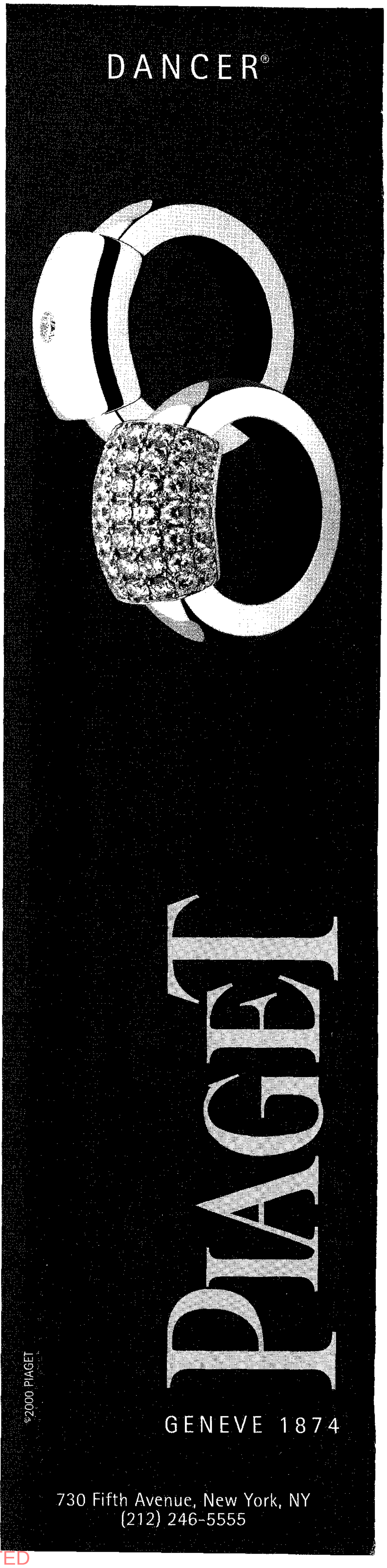

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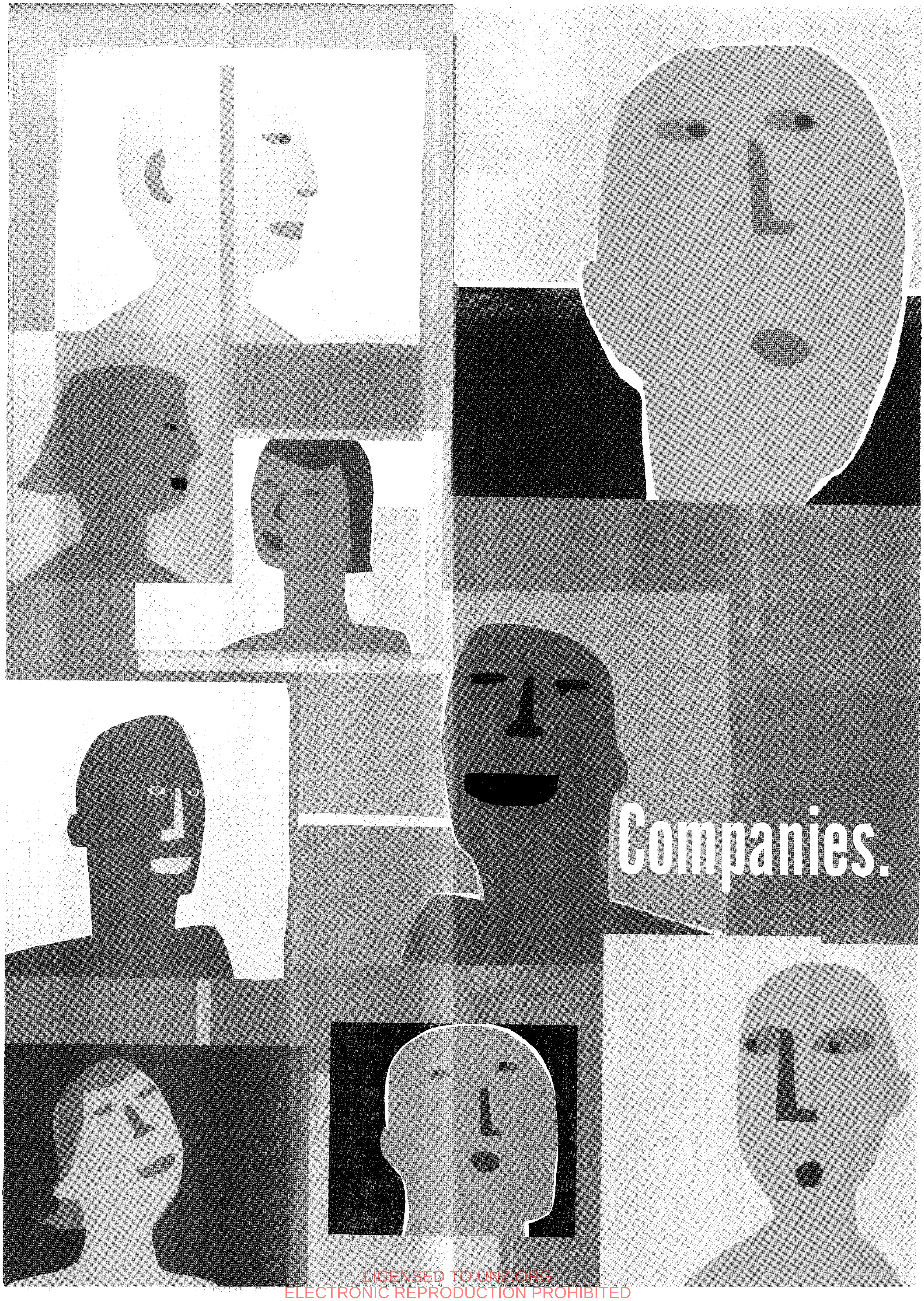

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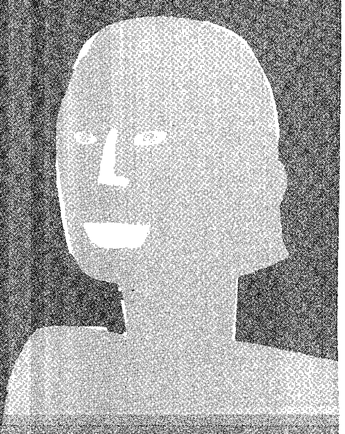

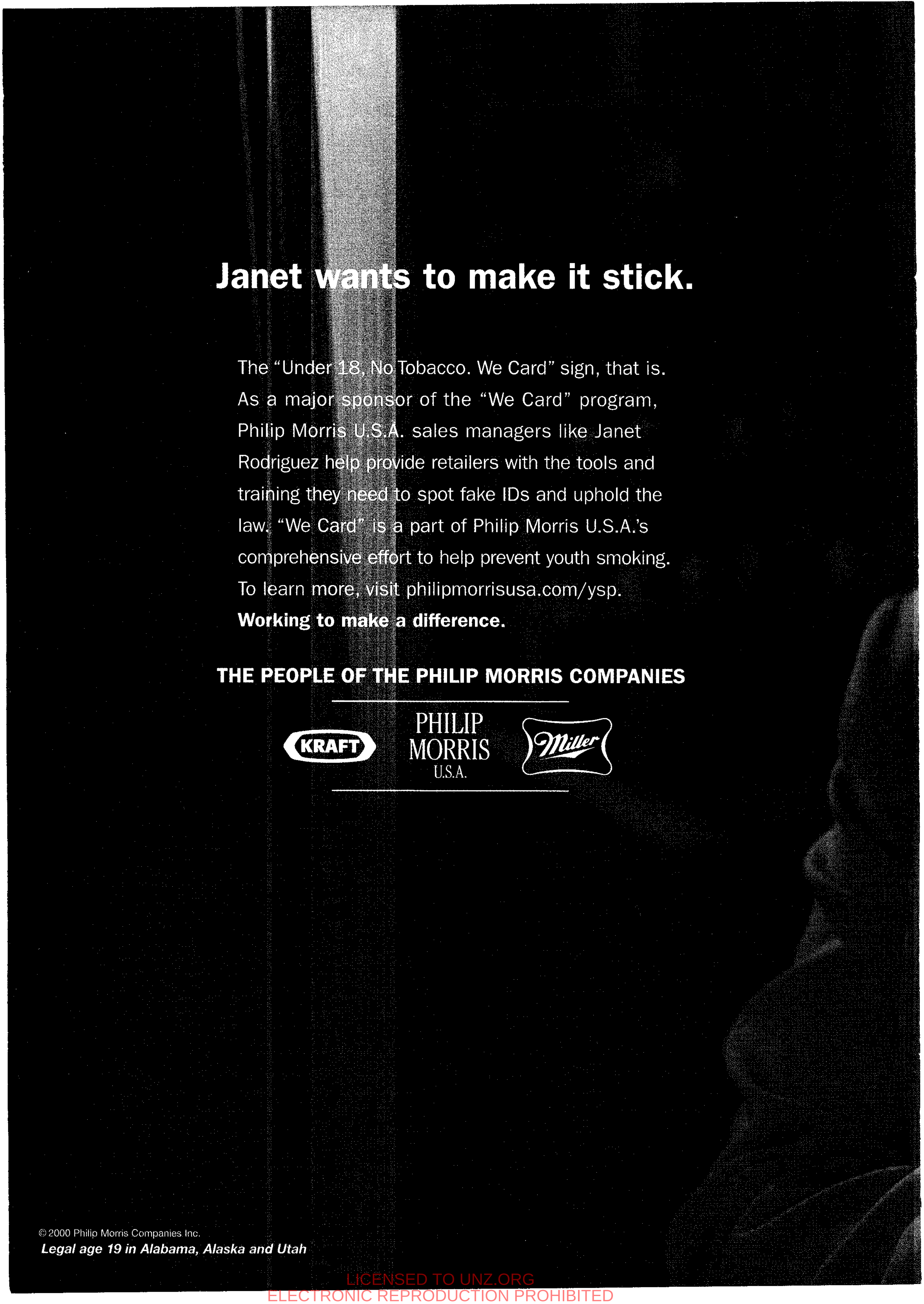

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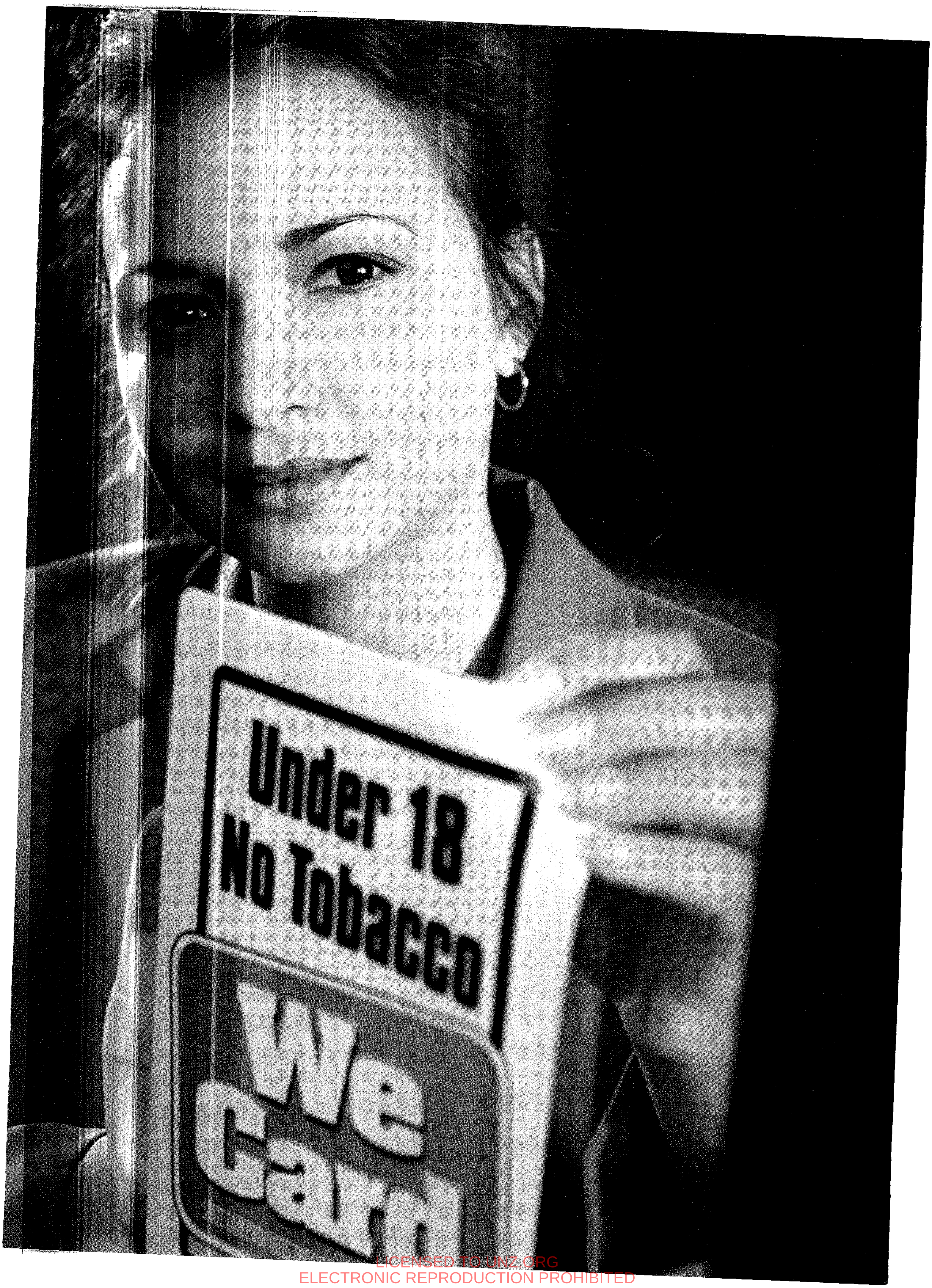
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THE MAIL

CONGO AT WAR

Philip Gourevitch is not writing about the Congo I recognize ("Forsaken," September 25th). He says that Congo is now less a real country than a general battlefield; the implication is that its sovereignty is less than worthy of respect, that its people would be better off without President Kabila anyway, and that if invaders take huge resources out of the country, well, so what? The literary conceit, from Conrad on, is that the area is a moral hellhole that forces people to behave badly. But when I go to the capital, Kinshasa, I meet with members of numerous church and non-governmental organizations who are working toward the reintegration of their country. I talk with my friends about their plans for the future, and they tell me stories about how, during the fighting in 1998, they survived without electricity and water in a city of more than five million people. When I return to the United States and try to tell the story of the ordinary Congolese—stripped of the tragic, the bizarre, and the pathetic—no one listens. It is not the story people want to hear.
Diane Russell
U.S. AID Congo adviser
New York City

In this capital of Western comforts, it's easy to forget about the shattered regions of the world that aren't invited to the banquet; for that reason alone, I greatly appreciated Philip Gourevitch's report from Congo. The most compelling aspect of his account, however, is his illustration of the industrialized world's complicity in the region's misery, and our indifference to it.
John Del Signore
Brooklyn, N.Y.

FOOTBALL PRAYERS

Those who insist on their "right" to pray at public-school football games don't seem to understand what a right is. The convoluted rhetoric and willful abandonment of logic revealed in the quotes from the clergymen Mark Singer spoke to in Asheville is frightening ("God and Football," September 25th). And yet, in many parts of the country, they represent the dominant culture. Their attack on the separation of church and state is just one part of the picture; many of our constitutional rights are vulnerable, and can be undermined by the self-righteous. Singer's article was a reminder of why, for me, the upcoming Presidential election is mostly about which candidate will appoint Justices to the Supreme Court who are willing to defend the Constitution.
Delores Pruett Kidd
Oakland, Calif.

We Ashevillians are always proud to be mentioned in national publications, especially when, as in Singer's article, we can be made to look like freaks and inquisitors. But not all Christians here think alike. Some of us Bible-thumping, church-going, testifying mountain folk are aware that nobody ever said, we couldn't pray at games. We can, and do, pray without ceasing; we just can't make others pray when they don't want to. That's the whole story, isn't it—the inexplicable paranoia of the majority in the face of minority rights? Even we understand that. But, as I say, it's always good to be noticed by you city folk.
David Brendan Hopes
Asheville, N.C.

If there was any doubt that "spontaneous" mass prayer at football games was political, not religious, one need only look at Jesus' own admonition: "But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret." Were the so-called fundamentalists really concerned about fidelity to the Lord's commandments instead of scoring points, they might have heeded his advice.
Adam Gregerman
New York City

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, N.Y. 10036. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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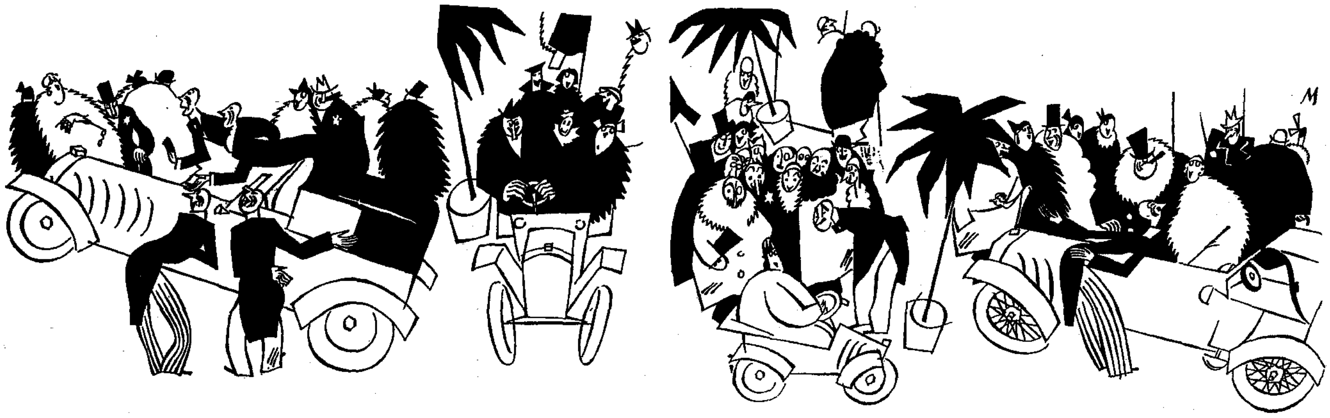

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BETRAYAL
Juliette Binoche, Liev Schreiber, and John Slattery are the love triangle in Harold Pinter's 1980 psychological drama. David Leveaux is the director. Previews begin Oct. 20. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-9393.)

BIG POTATO
Opening the Jewish Repertory Theatre's season, a black comedy from Arthur Laurents, in which a Holocaust survivor from Kew Gardens, Queens, captures a Nazi war criminal in her beauty parlor. In previews. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

A CLASS ACT
The late Ed Kleban's life following his success as the lyricist of "A Chorus Line" is the basis of this musical, starring Carolee Carmello, Jonathan Freeman, Randy Graff, and Julia Murney. With music and lyrics by Mr. Kleban and a book by Linda Kline and Lonny Price. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

DAHLING
Nan Schmid has the role of Tallulah Bankhead, in a drama about the actress's life, in which seven other actors portray fifty-odd characters. Previews begin Oct. 18. (Grove Street Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 358-5812.)

THE DINNER PARTY
Len Cariou, Veanne Cox, Penny Fuller, Jan Maxwell, John Ritter, and Henry Winkler are in the cast of Neil Simon's new play, set in the private dining room of a Parisian restaurant. John Rando is the director. In previews through Oct. 18. Opens Oct. 19 at 7. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY
The latest edition of Gerard Alessandrini's ongoing musical satire of the players and the plays along the Great White Way. In previews. (Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.)

THE FULL MONTY
A musical version of the 1997 movie. With a book by Terrence McNally and music and lyrics by David Yazbek. Jack O'Brien is the director. In previews. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

GAME SHOW
The audience members are part of the show in Jeffrey Finn and Bob Walton's interactive comedy. In previews. (45 Bleecker, at 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

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22	23	24				

HARD FEELINGS
A new comedy by Neena Beber, about a young woman in the throes of an identity crisis. In previews through Oct. 18. Opens Oct. 19 at 8 and runs through Nov. 4. (Women's Project Theatre, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK
Sean O'Casey's 1924 comitragedy, in a Roundabout Theatre production. John Crowley is the director. In previews through Oct. 18. Opens Oct. 19 at 6:45. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

LES MIZRAHI
The fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi sings, sews, dances, and gabs, in a Drama Dept. cabaret show directed by Richard Move. In previews through Oct. 18. Opens Oct. 19 at 8. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 239-6200.)

MÁQUINA HAMLET
Heiner Müller's "Hamlet Machine," as interpreted by the Argentinean troupe El Periférico de Objetos. Performances are in Spanish with simultaneous English translation. Oct. 18-21 at 7:30. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

PROOF
The Manhattan Theatre Club's staging of David Auburn's drama, starring Mary-Louise Parker, is reopening on Broadway. Daniel Sullivan is the director. In previews through Oct. 22. Opens Oct. 24 at 6:45. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

RED ROSES AND PETROL
A woman in Dublin prepares for her husband's funeral and for the return of her children from England and America, in a drama by Joseph O'Connor. Previews begin Oct. 17. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 581-4125.)

THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW
Richard O'Brien's 1975 cult musical, directed by Christopher Ashley and choreographed by Jerry Mitchell, stars Dick Cavett, Lea DeLaria, Joan Jett, Daphne Rubin-Vega, Jarrod Emick, Alice Ripley, Raul Esparza, and Tom Hewitt. Previews begin Oct. 18. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

SEUSSICAL: THE MUSICAL
A new musical by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty ("Ragtime," "Once on This Island"), which blends stories and characters from the books of Dr. Seuss. The cast includes David Shiner, Kevin Chamberlin, Michele Pawk, and Janine LaManna. Frank Galati is the director. Previews begin Oct. 18. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

STRANGER
Kyra Sedgwick and David Strathairn lead the cast of Craig Lucas's new play, about two strangers who meet on a plane. In previews through Oct. 15. Opens Oct. 17 at 8. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Charles Busch's satire of New York intellectual angst, staged by Manhattan Theatre Club, transfers to Broadway. Linda Lavin, Tony Roberts, and Michele Lee star. Lynn Meadow is the director. In previews. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

TEXTS FOR NOTHING
Bill Irwin directs and stars in his own adaptation of the prose works by Beckett. In previews through Oct. 14. Opens Oct. 15 at 7. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210, ext. 10.)

THE UNEXPECTED MAN
Alan Bates and Aileen Atkins portray two strangers on a train—a famous novelist and his fan—in Yasmina Reza's latest play. Matthew Warchus is the director. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE BEGINNING OF AUGUST
Mary Steenburgen heads the cast in an Atlantic Theatre Company staging of Tom Donaghy's latest play, in which a man enlists his stepmother to care for his infant daughter after his wife leaves him. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

BERLIN TO BROADWAY WITH KURT WEILL
A revue celebrating the composer's career, starring Lorinda Lisitza, Bjørn Olsson, Michael Winther, and Veronica Mittenzwei. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 239-6200.)

BLITHE SPIRIT
Noel Coward's 1941 comedy is the Pearl Theatre Company's season opener. (80 St. Mark's Pl. 598-9802. Closes Oct. 22.)

THE BUTTERFLY COLLECTION
Playwrights Horizons opens the season with a new play by Theresa Rebeck, starring Marian Seldes and Brian Murray. (416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Oct. 15.)

CHIC BAND
An episodic comedy tracing a year in the life of an all-female rock band. Written by Jaene Leonard. Mondays at 8, through Oct. 16. (Baby Jupiter, 170 Orchard St. 946-5862.)

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THE CRUMPLE ZONE
A dark comedy by Buddy Thomas, set during a Christmas gathering of five gay men. (Rattlestick Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl. 206-1515.)

DOLL
The camp company Theatre Couture puts its spin on Ibsen's "A Doll's House." Sherry Vine, Candis Cayne, David Ilku, and Mario Diaz are in the cast. With puppetry by Basil Twist. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

FOUR GUYS NAMED JOSÉ . . . AND UNA MUJER NAMED MARIA
This crowd-pleasing, crayon-colored revue of Latin song and dance is knowingly broad and hammy—imagine a sort of pan-Latin "Hee-Haw." The quartet of Josés (Philip Anthony, Henry Gainza, Allen Hidalgo, and Ricardo Puente) represent Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic; Maria (Lissette Gonzalez) is from Manhattan. After sending up the singers and songs that helped create Latin stereotypes (from Carmen Miranda's "I Make My Money with Bananas" to Ricky Martin's "Livin' La Vida Loca"), they deliver the remaining material—dance songs, songs of nostalgia for one's homeland, songs of love, songs about women named Maria—with exuberant wit and affection. The cast's talents are way too large for the small stage (although the lovely Ms. Gonzalez could use a few more sessions in the dance studio), and the accompaniment (a three-piece band) is terrific. (Blue Angel, 323 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

GORE VIDAL'S THE BEST MAN
A revival of Vidal's 1960 political drama, starring Charles Durning, Spalding Gray, Chris Noth, Elizabeth Ashley, Christine Ebersole, and Michael Learned, among others. Directed by Ethan McSweeny. (10/2/00) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

HOMMO HOSTAGE
A new solo show from James Lecesne ("Word of Mouth"), in which the writer/actor portrays ten characters talking about love. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes Oct. 15.)

IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES
A revue tracing the history of the musical form, which had its New York première at the New Victory Theatre in 1999. With Charles Bevel, Carter Calvert, Debra Laws, Gregory Porter, Cheryl Alexander, and Michael Mandell. Jim Ehinger is the musical director. (B. B. King Blues Club & Grill, 243 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

JITNEY
August Wilson's play is set in a car-service station in 1977, in a part of Pittsburgh which is being demolished faster than it's being renovated. In this atmosphere of decay, Wilson's characters struggle with themselves and with each other to find some hope, and some peace, amidst the rubble. The cast of nine wonderful actors hit perfect notes of collision and cohesion, and turn what might otherwise be a draggy experience (the play runs to nearly three hours) into a riveting and moving one. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

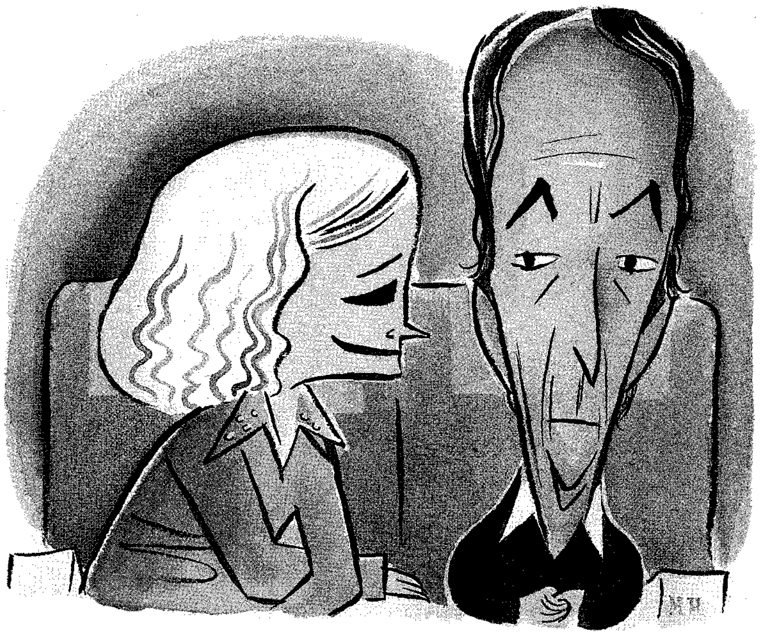
A LESSON BEFORE DYING
Romulus Linney's moving but uneven adaptation of Ernest J. Gaines's 1993 novel, about the unjust execution in Louisiana in 1948 of a young, uneducated black man and its effect on the lives around him. The story's wrenching power lies not in its outrage but in the almost inexplicable grace the characters muster as their only resistance to being treated like lesser beings. The newcomer Jamahl Marsh, as the angry naïf charged with murder, is terrific; given a radio by the town's overburdened black schoolteacher (Isiah Whitlock, Jr.) and a diary to record his last days, he makes the audience recognize anew the sanctity of life. When he appears onstage for his final meal before the chair, wanting to hear jazz on his radio rather than listen to a preacher's sad prayers, it's hard not to look away. The rest of the cast is fine, in a typically good staging by the Signature Theatre company. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes Oct. 15.)

LIFEGAME
A show by the British troupe Improbable Theatre, in which a different onstage guest's life story becomes the basis of the improv drama each night. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER
The Roundabout's revival of Kaufman and Hart's evergreen 1939 satire of Hollywood and of New York literary society is pure gold. The play itself is a model of comic construction and is chock-full of vintage stage business, which the excellent cast executes with gleeful nineteen-forties snap. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300. Closes Oct. 15.)

THE MUSIC MAN
A delightful revival of Meredith Willson's 1957 musical, directed by Susan Stroman and starring Craig Bierko, who is making his Broadway début in the role of Professor Harold Hill. The show hits us with the simplicity and seamlessness of a perfect fairy tale, and it puts music in its proper place—right up there with all the other miracles of life. (5/22/00) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

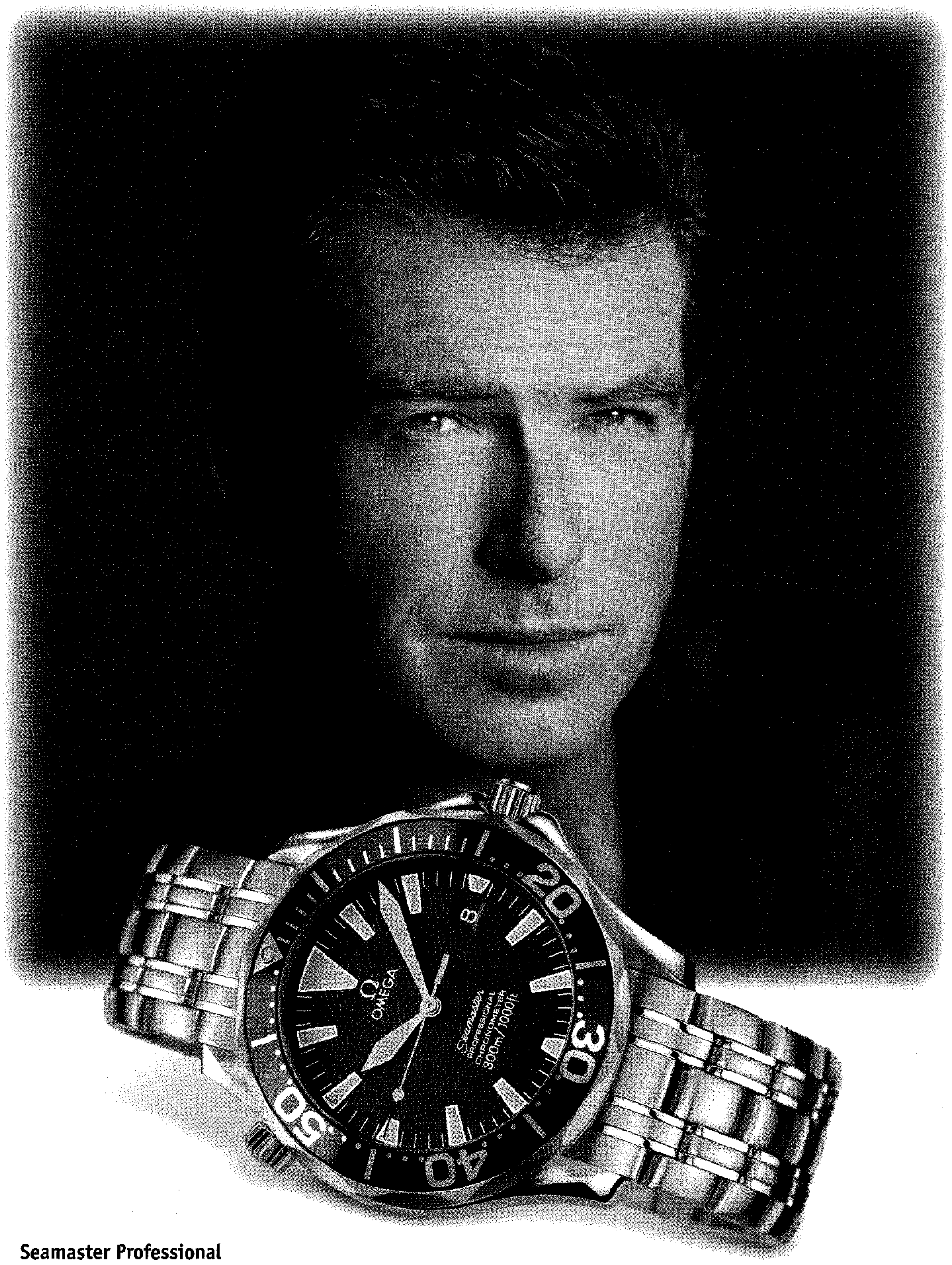
SNAPSHOTS 2000
The Worth Street Theatre's annual offering of one-acts this year includes plays by Robert O'Hara,



Kyra Sedgwick and David Strathairn, in "Stranger," by Craig Lucas.

MARCELLUS HALL

Pierce Brosnan's Choice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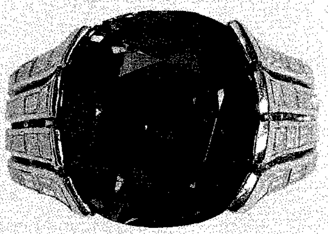

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Romulus Linney, Peter Hedges, Mark Novom, and Jeff Cohen. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 206-1515. Closes Oct. 29.)

SOUL OF AN INTRUDER
A psychological thriller by Steve Braunstein, about a triangle between a woman and two of her former lovers, who come back into her life at the same time. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 279-4200. Closes Oct. 14.)

SOUTH OF NO NORTH (STORIES OF THE BURIED LIFE)
Charles Bukowski's short stories, adapted for the stage by Leo Farley, in an encore staging by the 29th Street Rep. (212 W. 29th St. 465-0575. Closes Oct. 22.)

STRAIGHT AS A LINE
Primary Stages' season opener is a comedy by Luis Alfaro, about the tangled relationship between a casino hostess and her son, a male escort who has AIDS. (354 W. 45th 333-4052. Closes Oct. 22.)

THE SYRINGA TREE
A tour-de-force solo drama, written by and starring South African native and first-time playwright Pamela Gien, who gives an extraordinary performance in all twenty-three roles. It's a love story, really, about the strong, lasting bond between a white girl and her black nanny in South Africa. Told from the girl's point of view, the story starts when she is six, in 1965, and continues through the following twenty years of turbulent and violent upheavals over apartheid. The play, which is named for a tree common in South Africa, is emotionally powerful without being overtly political; audiences regularly emerge from the theatre crying. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

TALLULAH HALLELUJAH!
Tovah Feldshuh portrays the screen star Tallulah Bankhead, in a musical portrait set at a 1956 U.S.O. show. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

WHERE EVERYTHING IS EVERYTHING
Daisy Eagan and Paul Sparks portray a shy graphic designer and a brash financial consultant, in a romance by Stephen Spoonamore. (New York Performance Works, 128 Chambers St. 539-8892. Closes Oct. 14.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

COPENHAGEN
Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE COUNTESS
Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.

DIRTY BLONDE
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE FANTASTICKS
Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.

FOSSE
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

FULLY COMMITTED
Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.

KISS ME, KATE
Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.
SWING!
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.
THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

LUCINDA CHILDS DANCE COMPANY
The works of the longtime minimalist choreographer have grown more lush in movement since her Judson Dance Theatre days. "Parcours" offers a sort of evening-length retrospective of this evolution, with six pieces that range from "Radical Courses" (1976) to "Variété de Variété," which premièred in April. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Oct. 11 and Oct. 13-14 at 7:30 and Oct. 15 at 3.)

JULIO BOCCA AND BALLET ARGENTINO
The danseur noble for the American Ballet Theatre can fill stadiums in his native land. Here, his company performs a selection of ballet works by Mauro Bigonzetti, Oscar Araiz, and others and finishes with "Piazzolla Tango Vivo," choreographed by Ana Maria Stekelman. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Oct. 11-15 at 8.)

DAYTON CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY
The thirty-two-year-old troupe, now under the direction of company veteran Kevin Ward following the death of its founder, Jeraldyne Blunden, is a treasure-house for African-American choreography. For this engagement, they perform "Children of the Passage," choreographed by Donald McKayle and Ronald K. Brown, "Sky Garden," by Dwight Rhoden, and Ward's "Sets and Chasers." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Oct. 10-13 at 8, Oct. 14 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 15 at 2 and 7:30.)

"STRANGE ATTRACTORS"
The Stephen Petronio company presents a two-part work inspired by a facet of chaos theory, which hypothesizes the existence of a moving magnetic focal force within chaotic fields. The costumes were created by Tanya Sarne of Ghost, and the artist Anish Kapoor designed the polished-metal set. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Oct. 17-20 at 8, Oct. 21 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 22 at 2.)

DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP
Oct. 12-13 at 8: Hope Clark presents "Raw, Seeds, Need," a solo, duet, and trio, respectively, and Yasuko Yokoshi and Gonnie Heggen bring "Royal Madness (Noblework in Progress)." ♦ Oct. 14 at 8 and Oct. 15 at 3: Joyce S. Lim and Nami Yamamoto in "Wan Dollah?," which explores cultural differences between the Malaysian Chinese and the Japanese. ♦ Oct. 19-21 at 8 and Oct. 22 at 3: David Brick, Andrew Simonet, and Amy Smith, of Headlong Dance Theatre, have been making dances together since their Wesleyan days, and their collaborations still have a sort of inspired collegiate hilarity (think Second City in tights). They set one work to a car-alarm score, and for last year's "ST*R W*RS and Other Stories" most of the cast wore Princess Leia hairdos (earmuffs, actually). In "Ulysses: Sly Uses of a Book by James Joyce," the trio applies their drollery to a literary monument. Their version of the expatriate masterpiece transposes the action to present-day Philadelphia but retains a few anachronisms, such as arm garters and Bloomsday-era bathing suits. (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

LI CHIAO-PING DANCE
The eight-member company offers four group works and one solo, "Grafting," the choreogra-

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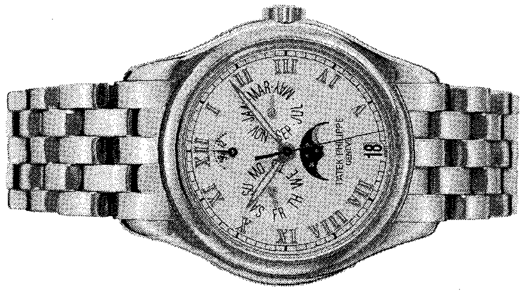

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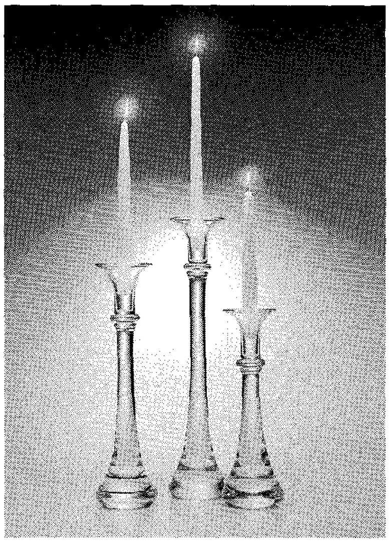

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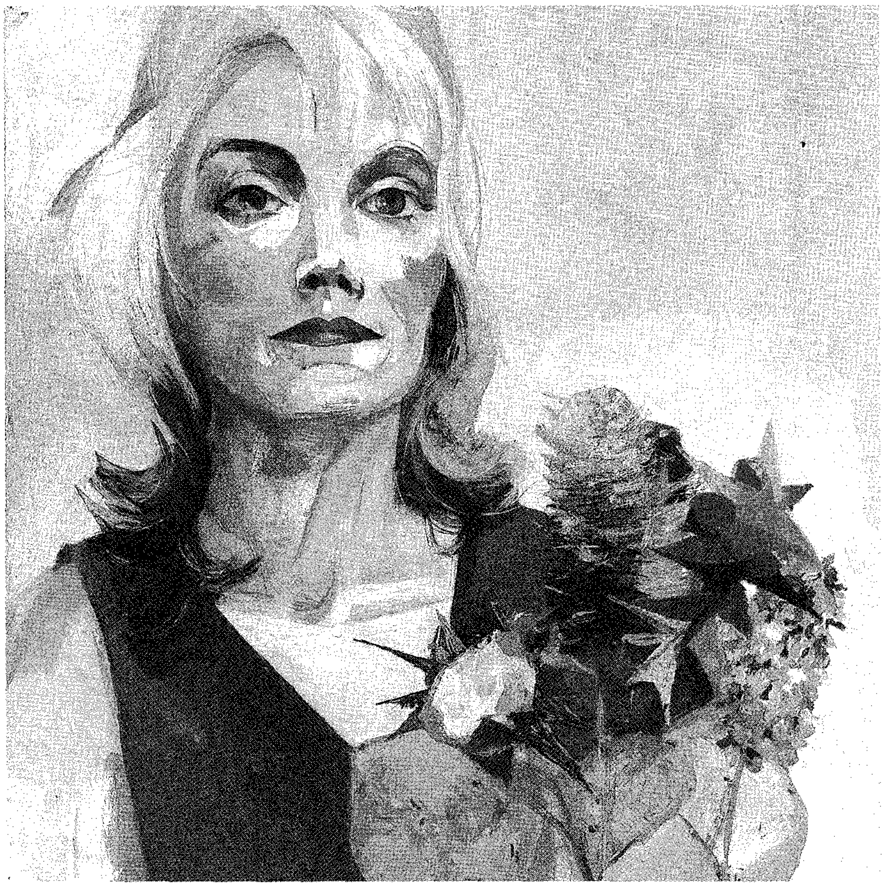
pher's first since an auto accident last year. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Oct. 12-15 at 8:30.)

TRIPLE PLAY DANCE
Symphony Space opens its dance season with a trio of works from as many companies: Limon Dance Company presents "An Anatomy of Intent," Peggy Baker Dance Projects performs "Some of What Was Seen and Heard," and Donald Byrd/The Group concludes with "Alleged Dances." (Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Oct. 12-14 at 8 and Oct. 15 at 3.)



EMMY AWARD *Nearly thirty years after she went honky-tonking with Gram Parsons, Emmylou Harris is the preëminent diva of progressive country. On her new album, "Red Dirt Girl," she is backed by rich, layered sound produced by Daniel Lanois protégé Malcolm Burn and such vocalists as Patti Scialfa and Dave Matthews. Onstage at the Beacon Theatre, Harris and her three-man band will rely on their own considerable musical virtuosity and, of course, on her famous soprano and graceful presence. It doesn't hurt that she's still so damn beautiful (see Concerts).*

RICCARDO VECCHIO

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Oct. 14 at 8: Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra performs Odissi dance of India. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St.) ♦ Oct. 14 at 8: Folk music and dance of Central and Eastern Europe. (Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Ave. at 27th St.) ♦ Oct. 21 at 8: "Buddhist Song and Dance from Korea: The Sound of Ecstasy and Nectar of Enlightenment." (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) (For tickets to World Music Institute events, call 545-7536.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

PHIL LESH & FRIENDS
Furthur and furthur with the affable former bassist for the Grateful Dead, who's winding up a seven-night stand. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Oct. 11 and Oct. 13-16, all at 8.)

"DUETS ON THE HUDSON"
Jim Hall, the poet laureate of jazz guitarists, has created some of his most involving and inspired work in duo settings, often with bassists. (His recorded work with Ron Carter and Red Mitchell and his musical tête-à-tête with Dave Holland in 1999 remain the model for all guitar-bass encounters.) Hall has lately developed a knowing rapport with the excellent young bassist **Scott Colley.** / When the saxophonist **Joe Lovano** and the Cuban pianist **Gonzalo Rubalcaba** collaborated on "Flying Colors" a few years back, sparks flew, both in the studio and in the series of concerts that followed the recording. Bringing these two together again should be particularly fruitful now that Rubalcaba has developed into a more subtle and relaxed player. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 721-6500. Oct. 13-14 at 8.)

SIDNEY BECHET SOCIETY
So many young jazz players are now fluent in the swing and pre-swing idioms, and this concert is further proof. The trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, the trumpeter Byron Stripling, the saxophonist Victor Goines, the pianist Eric Reed, the drummer Winard Harper, the guitarist Frank Vignola, and the bassist Rubin Rogers join Daniel Bechet (Sidney's only son) on drums, in a program celebrating the works of the great clarinettist and saxophonist. (Theatre at Greenwich Village Center, 219 Sullivan St. For more information, call 516-627-4468. Oct. 16 at 6:15 and 8:30.)

MOBY
A high-profile artist in a faceless genre, this modern-day one-man electronic band humanizes electronic music by broadening its base: Bessie Jones and other early-twentieth-century African-American artists recorded by folk-music archivist Alan Lomax have central roles in his album "Play." (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Oct. 18 and Oct. 21-22 at 8.)

CMJ MUSIC MARATHON
Though the Olympic games don't happen every year and the CMJ Music Marathon does—this gathering of pop bands, both hopeful and established, has been an annual event since 1981—the two events have more in common than you might think. Just as the Olympics brings together athletes from all the world's nations, the CMJ Festival unites performers from every conceivable genre, from hip-hop to drum-and-bass, from indie rock, to riot-grrrl groups. All in all, there are more than a thousand different bands, including Hooverphonic, the Donnas, and the Pernice Brothers, competing for attention, which makes it similar to the Olympics in another respect: given the welter of activity, it sometimes seems easier just to ignore the whole thing. Dedicated fans should visit www.cmj.com/marathon for details on the festival, which runs from Oct. 19 to Oct. 22.

EMMYLOU HARRIS
The grande dame of progressive country. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Oct. 19 at 8.)

PROMISE RING
The Milwaukee-based quartet turns out a style of music called, variously, emo-core, emo-rock, and just plain emo, which is short for "emotion." It's carefully crafted, earnest, and surprisingly articulate. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Oct. 20 at 8.)

"A MAGIC SCIENCE: CELEBRATING JIMI HENDRIX"
The hipster jazz trio Medeski Martin & Wood joins the Gil Evans Orchestra, Vernon Reid, Chris Whitley, Marc Anthony Thompson, Sandra St. Victor, and others for a tribute to the guitar master, who died thirty years ago last month. Glenn McKay will provide the light show. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 20 at 8 and Oct. 21 at 7:30.)

ELTON JOHN
Costume changes, boas, and other Liberace-style excesses. In other words, a great show. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Oct. 20-21 at 8.)

CLUBS

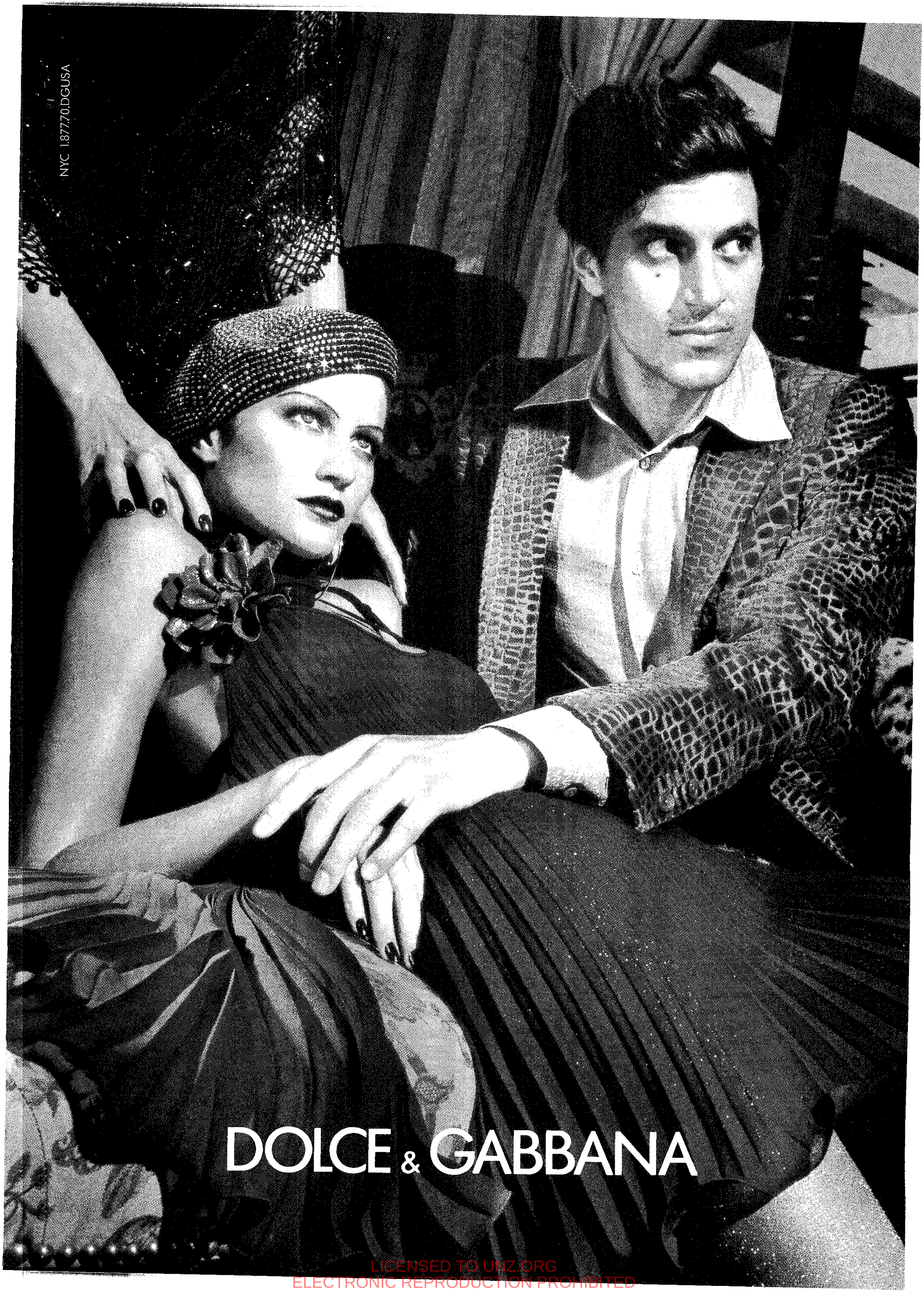
Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
243 W. 42nd St. (269-4849)—Oct. 11: On his latest album, "Down the Road I Go," **Travis Tritt** continues to demonstrate an unrepentant good-ole-boy orneriness that's something of an anomaly in the sensitive New Age incarnation of modern Nashville. Oct. 20-21: **Gregg Allman** and friends. After thirty years, innumerable gold and platinum albums, endless touring, and two failed marriages to Cher, Gregg still feels compelled to occasionally leave the Brothers behind.

LA BELLE ÉPOQUE
827 Broadway, at 13th St. (254-6436)—Oct 15: A foot-stomping night of Louisiana music, with **Andre Thierry & Zydeco Magic.**

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Oct. 11-12: **John Hiatt's** new release, "Crossing Muddy Waters," is the first acoustic album of his twenty-six-year recording career. The conventional country-blues enthusiast might be slightly confounded by the heaviness of the electric bass, but Hiatt fans will appreciate the gritty, sparse arrangements, and onstage Hiatt will play his blues the way they were born—alone with a guitar.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Oct. 12: Led by the former Rake's Progress vocalist Tim Cloherty, the home-town ensemble **Booga Sugar** dispenses with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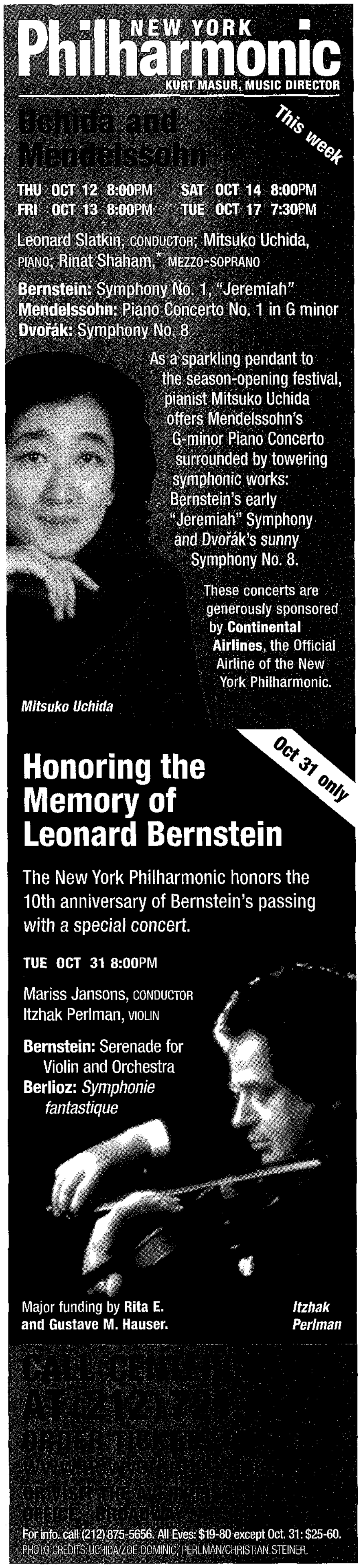
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Mendelssohn: Piano Concerto No. 1 in G minor
Dvořák: Symphony No. 8

As a sparkling pendant to the season-opening festival, pianist Mitsuko Uchida offers Mendelssohn's G-minor Piano Concerto surrounded by towering symphonic works: Bernstein's early "Jeremiah" Symphony and Dvořák's sunny Symphony No. 8.

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that band's earnest rock sound for a groovier, ironic take on classic disco. With the **Getaway People,** a funky, sample-heavy quintet on loan from Norway. Oct. 13-14: The semi-pornographic psychobilly act **Nashville Pussy** features a female guitarist and a female bassist who have a tendency to take their affection for each other to eye-popping levels. The music's awful, but they put on a rather entertaining show.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Oct. 11-12: **Billy Bragg,** the blue-collar bard from Barking, England, stops by with his band, the Blokes.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Oct. 12-14: **Victoria Williams.** Even those who have trouble with this Louisiana-bred folksinger's voice—a mildly cloying, Kewpie-doll instrument—have been charmed by her talent for songwriting. Her new album, "Water to Drink," shows off both her interpretive and compositional skills. Oct. 17 and Oct. 19: **Robyn Hitchcock** and **Grant Lee Phillips,** two of pop music's canniest and most undefinable songwriters, share the stage for what promises to be an evening of strangely entertaining duets.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Oct. 18: **Tony Levin,** a shy and esteemed bald bass player best known for his work with King Crimson and Peter Gabriel, lives to expand the capabilities of his instrument. In addition to being a master of the ten-string Chapman stick, he's developed "funk fingers," a pair of small drumsticks he attaches to his fingers while playing a custom-made three-string bass. Oct. 18-19: **Stew,** the leader of Los Angeles's Negro Problem, performs his solo material. Oct. 20: **Damon & Naomi.** The former backbone of Galaxie 500, the bassist and vocalist Naomi Yang and the drummer Damon Krukowski create haunting pop founded on Yang's velvety voice. Oct. 21: **Freeheat,** featuring former Jesus & Mary Chain guitarist Jim Reid.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Oct. 12: Led by the former front man for the pioneering Los Angeles punk band X, the **John Doe Thing** tills the rootsy soil of rockabilly and country music. With **Mary Lou Lord.** Oct. 18: **Robyn Hitchcock** and **Grant Lee Phillips** (see Joe's Pub). Oct. 24: **Le Tigre,** the new band from Bikini Kill's Kathleen Hanna. The riot-grrrl themes of her punk past are still intact, but with new musical colorings; Hanna's three-piece outfit mixes sampled drumbeats with early B-52's-style fuzz-box guitar riffs and classic sixties organ and synthesizer sounds.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Oct. 12: The transplanted British guitarist and songwriter **Francis Dunnery.** Oct. 13: The **John Doe Thing** and **Mary Lou Lord** (see Maxwell's). Oct. 14-15: Former Minuteman **Mike Watt** barrels into town.

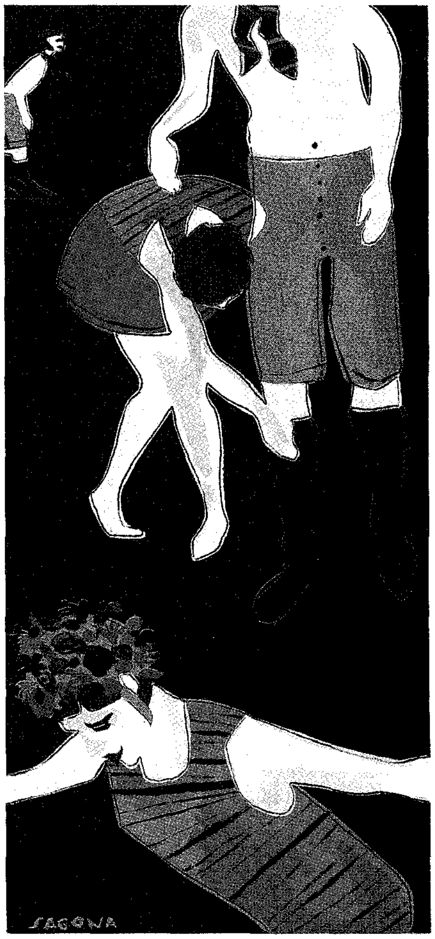
WETLANDS
161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Oct. 15: A night of New Jersey punk, with the straight-ahead hardcore of **OS 101** and the horn-driven, ska-influenced songs of **Catch 22.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Oct. 10-14: If the pianist **George Shearing** ever played an inelegant note in his five-decade jazz career, no one seems to remember it. One of those deliciously elusive players who can't be accurately linked to any particular style, Shearing uses bop, swing, classical, and Latin piano phrases to design densely melodic solos. If the fire of improvisation doesn't truly ignite, the warmth of his gracious and witty playing is always felt. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Oct. 15: Supernal technique, sound, and taste have made **Ray Brown** jazz's preëminent bassist, but his storehouse of blues melodies and his ability to express them with funky eloquence are what make him a great American artist. With perfect tone and rhythm, he lays down walking lines that can move mountains. Because Brown is obsessed with melody, his solos are also a joy, brimming with sturdy blues phrases and tuneful passages. His guests include the whip-smart trumpeter **Nicholas Payton** and the canyon-deep vocalist **Kevin Mahogany.** Oct. 17-22: The **Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Stars.** The spirit of unadulterated bebop—as personified by the sorely missed trumpeter—lives on in this conglomerate ensemble that joins illustrious veterans from various Gillespie bands, including the saxophonist **James Moody,** the trombonist **Slide Hampton,** and the trumpeter **Jon Faddis.**

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Oct. 15: The **Andy Summers** trio. Last year it was Thelonious Monk; now the former Police guitarist turns his attention to another jazz icon, Charles Mingus. The results can be heard on the new album "Peggy's Blue Skylight," which comes replete with any number of postmodern gestures that one might expect from a rock star approaching hallowed jazz material. To his credit, Summers has developed into a lyrically minded improviser with an ear for unusual textures that he uses to adorn some stunning Mingus melodies in new finery. Oct. 17-22: The **Jimmy Smith** quartet. Catch him on a good night and Smith will make you want to kick all those new Hammond B-3-organ enthusiasts in their rears and send them whimpering back to the practice room. Smith, the man who single-handedly put the electric organ on the map, can still make smoke rise from a bandstand, and in the company of the fluid guitarist **Russell Malone** he just might. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**



Headlong Dance Theatre, in "Ulysses," at D.T.W. (see Dance).

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JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Oct. 15 and Oct. 22: The **Howard Fishman** quartet. The guitarist and singer Fishman is hardly your typical cabaret performer: he can be found in such diverse locales as the Oak Room, Sardi's, and the L-train platform in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. And his sound follows suit: while not exactly Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli reincarnated, Fishman and his violinist **Russell Farhang** (along with a bassist and a cornettist) spin out the freshest small-group swing in the city.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—The conductor and composer **André Previn** (here Oct. 13-15) isn't slumming when he turns to the jazz piano. He had a major hit recording with a jazz rendition of "My Fair Lady" in the nineteen-fifties, and he's kept his hand in ever since (he turned in a respectable Ellington recording just recently). Previn isn't about to quit his day job, but his love for the music is apparent and often infectious. Oct. 16: Vocalist **Kendra Shank.** Oct. 17-22: The **Mose Allison** quartet. Behind Allison's laid-back Mississippi charm lies the mind of a killer. Lyrically dismembering hypocrites is a full-time job, but Allison somehow finds time to slip in some wonderfully eccentric piano playing alongside his honey-oozing blues drawl. Oct. 23: The exceptional Cuban guitarist and singer **Juan-Carlos Formell.** Dining.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Oct. 11-12: That fact that **Carla Bley's** musical background isn't steeped in the blues hasn't made her any less of an authority on the subject. By injecting the form with ingenious twists, she and her new band, 4x4—featuring the electric bassist **Steve Swallow,** the trumpeter **Lou Soloff,** and the drummer **Victor Lewis**—put the novelty and smarts in such new Bley tunes as "Blues in Twelve Bars, Blues in Twelve Other Bars." Oct. 16: The saxophonist **Tim Berne** and the bassist **Michael Formaneck** watch each other's moves like a hungry cat trailing a well-fed mouse. They've been teammates for long enough that nothing either one does can throw the other off balance.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Oct. 20-21: The **Michele Rosewoman** trio. The pianist and composer Rosewoman treads no stylistic path but her own. Her unclassifiable, defiantly personal sound combines darting tropical rhythms with fervent soloing. She was there before the recent vogue for Cuban music began, and she'll be expertly retooling the island's idiomatic sounds long after it's no longer hip.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Oct. 15: The **Kenny Barron** trio. As consistent as he is ubiquitous, pianist Barron turns each set into a lesson in unmannered, eloquent improvisation. Oct. 17-22: The **Lou Donaldson** quartet. Well-turned bop spills into R. & B. terrain when Donaldson, an alto saxophonist, hits the stage, pledging allegiance to both virtuosity and entertainment. The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra holds sway on Mondays.

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MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

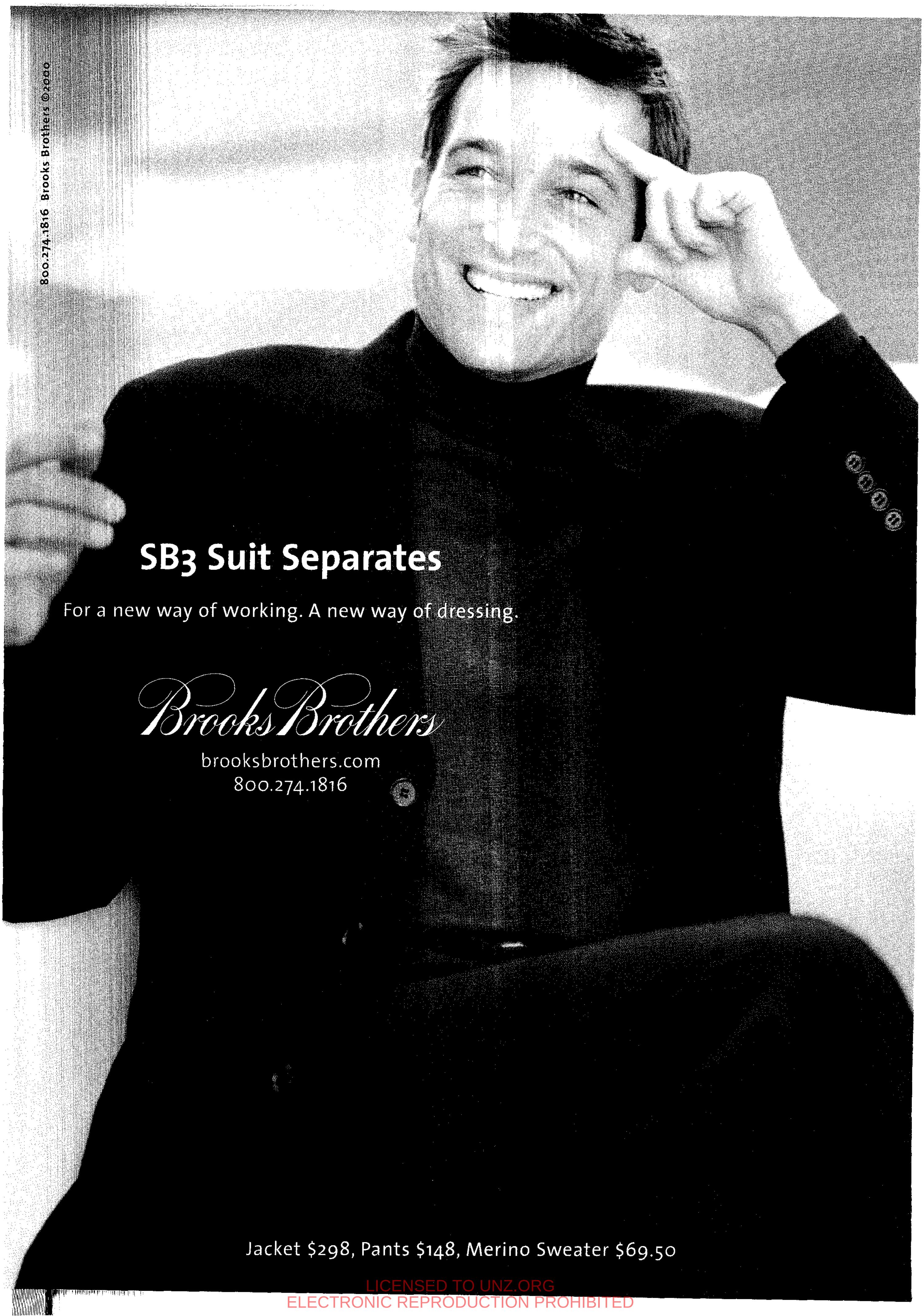
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Art and the Empire City"** presents paintings, photography, and decorative art from one of New York's early periods of irrational exuberance, between the completion of the Erie Canal, in 1825, and the beginning of the Civil War, in 1861. Official portraits and early Hudson River School paintings are followed by a flurry of art, commissioned and collected by the newly prosperous, from European and native-born (and increasingly Manhattanite) craftsmen. The concurrent building boom is depicted in Matthew Dripps's large-scale 1851 map and Frederick Law Olmsted's presentation boards for Central Park. Mathew Brady's photographs of the scrubby land Olmsted worked are among the examples of the era's new media, which included daguerreotypes and glass-negative photography. The saga concludes with Frederic Church's extravagant and extravagantly displayed "The Heart of the Andes," standing alone within a vast trompe-l'oeil casement-window frame, just as Church installed it in New York, and displayed it on a subsequent tour from 1859 to 1864, for unprecedented numbers of viewers; this show credits those blockbuster audiences with creating a swell of interest in public art which led to the founding of the Met. Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"The Golden Deer of Eurasia: Scythian and Sarmatian Treasures from the Russian Steppes."** Through Feb. 4. ♦ **"The Year One: Art of the Ancient World East and West."** Through Jan. 14. ♦ **"The Divine Comtesse"** presents photographs, by Pierre-Louis Pierson, of the Countess de Castiglione (1837-1899). Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Queen Victoria and Thomas Sully"** gathers the oil portraits, oil sketches, drawings, and other ephemera connected to the preparation of the full-length portrait (also on view) by Sully, the British-born Philadelphia artist. Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—For the third and final cycle of **"MOMA 2000,"** the Modern becomes the Contemporary. **"Open Ends,"** an exhibition focussing on art since 1960, begins with two large-scale installations in the lobby and garden hall. James Rosenquist's eighty-six-foot paean to American popular culture, "F-111," runs the length of the second floor like a billboard, while Chinese sculptor Cai Guo-Qiang's arrow-riddled wooden boat, a heavy-handed allegory about appropriating the enemy's ammunition, hangs suspended in midair above the escalators. The works suggest the bookends of Pop and pluralism, which frame the last forty years of art. This juxtaposition recurs in the gallery devoted to "Pop and After," where one of Jasper Johns's seminal flags is flanked by Alighierro e Boetti's map of the world (woven by Afghani weavers) and David Hammon's "African-American Flag," whose stars and stripes are now red, black, and green. A different kind of compare-and-contrast is offered by "Matter," which alternates between art and design created with an eye for materials; a plastic sculpture by Matthew Barney is displayed beside a set of Japanese salt and pepper shakers. The show culminates in "Innocence and Experience," about the treacheries and triumphs of childhood, summed up by a Robert Gober playpen. The pen has three walls and one open end, as if to signify both neglect and freedom. Through Jan. 2. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—One design icon salutes another: the Goog devotes its spiralling interior court to an exhibition that measures the impact of the relaxed couturier Giorgio Armani. Through Jan. 10. ♦ **"Amazons of the Avant-Garde"** is a modest survey of six women painters, each of whom played a vital role in the evolution of the Russian jeunesse dorée. Through Jan. 7. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The museum presents the first full-scale retrospective devoted to the photographer Edward Steichen in forty years. Through Feb. 4. ♦ **"Lovely Life: The Recent Work of Agnes Martin."** Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Roni Horn: Still Water (The River Thames, for Example), 1999."** Through Jan. 14. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Following on the heels of the Metropolitan's "Rock Style" exhibition, **"Hip-Hop Nation: Roots, Rhymes, and Rage"** offers an enthusiastically bland primer on what is commonly called urban musical culture. The show is a virtually highlightless parade of dated street wear and brief video clips, although there's a certain odd pleasure in glancing over loose-leaf sheets of handwritten rap lyrics. Who knew that Ice-T had such exemplary penmanship?



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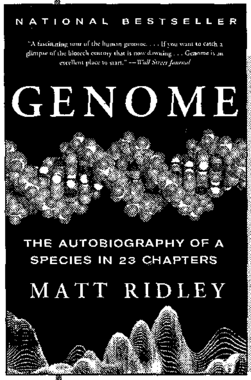

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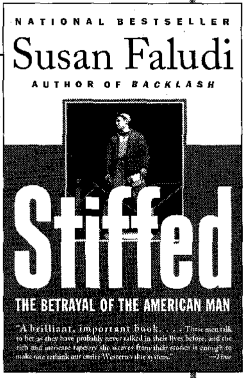

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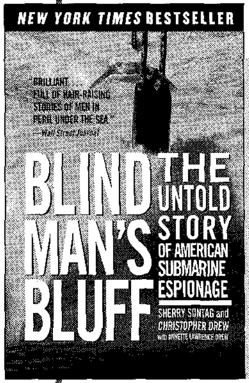
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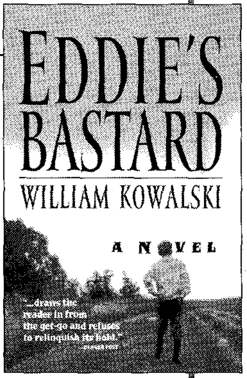

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NOW IN PAPERBACK

More graffiti art might have given the show a visual boost, but the few examples here hardly compete with the enlarged covers of *Vibe* and *Newsweek*. Viewers lured by the promise of "Roots, Rhymes, and Rage" would do better to expect "Parkas, Posters, and Periodicals." Through Dec. 31. ♦ A retrospective devoted to Lee Krasner ends its national tour in the artist's birthplace. Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"Gold of the Nomads: Scythian Treasures from Ancient Ukraine."** Through Jan. 21. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS
548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—Bridget Riley's retrospective isn't easy on the eyes. Her abstract paintings are notoriously dizzying, defying your gaze with a bag of optical tricks that turn abstract patterns of stripes, undulations, and dots into visual static faster than you can say Excedrin. Consider the virtuosity of a painting like "Paean," from 1973. Close inspection reveals it to be a crisp series of red, green, and blue stripes on a white ground. But as you step back, the painting turns into a pulsing rainbow that breaks down into vibrating pixels. Riley is highly regarded in her native England, but she has been relegated to the narrow annals of Op-art history in this country. This show of nineteen works, all but four from the sixties and seventies, should help to reëstablish her historical distinction. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

JAPAN SOCIETY
333 E. 47th St. (832-1155)—**"Yes Yoko Ono"** offers forty years of Ono's installations, film and video, music, and performance art, along with the scores for more conceptual work, like "Lighting Piece," which instructs the performer to "light a match and watch until it goes out." Ono's early artistic alliance with the developing Fluxus movement is well represented, and the Fluxus philosophy of everyday existence as the site of art is borne out in the documentation of her marriage to and collaborations with John Lennon. Their work together included an international billboard campaign, "War is over! / If you want it / Happy Christmas from John & Yoko," as well as more than one weeklong "Bed-in for Peace," duly recorded by press photographers. As Ono gets older—she turns sixty-seven this year—she has begun to bronze her earlier work, a typically faux-naïve gesture toward solidifying her legacy. Through Jan. 14. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 6; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
583 Broadway (219-1222)—For the past quarter-century, the Parisian photographic team Pierre et Gilles have combined campy, retro glamour with religious iconography, using an extravagant, highly staged production routine and elaborate retouching. Their ever-growing hagiography of friends and celebrities includes Catherine Deneuve as a cloud-ensconced White Queen; a "Petit Communiste" of 1990, posed formally in full military regalia, crying over his lost empire; and the porn-influenced "Les Plaisirs de la Forêt" series, with a pinhole viewing format perfectly suited to voyeurs. The newest work, a pair of "autoportraits sans visage," are as faceless as advertised, with the artists represented by motorcycle helmets with darkened visors, lapped by flame, and surrounded by glossy, translucent, winged skulls—the studio version of every biker's death wish. Through Jan. 7. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—The first American retrospective of John Wesley, an artist pigeonholed as Pop in the early sixties but who has long since been redefined as undefinable. Donald Judd, a close friend and champion of Wesley's work, once deemed it "humorous and goofy" (that was a compliment). As this show demonstrates, the artist's unique style has wavered little over the past forty years. The basic elements recur—superflat perspective (Minoan pottery meets comic strip), a peculiar palette (fleshy pinks and chalky blues), and a surreal cast of characters (a menagerie in cahoots with sportsmen,

Dagwood, and naked ladies). Each image is stripped down to its essentials, as much emblem as picture. The results are at once anachronistic and timeless. Through Jan. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ
The great Polish sculptor's sensibility seems strangely out of time—a holdover from the postwar era, with its love of bleak, earnest metaphors. And yet Abakanowicz's roughly modelled headless figures and bodiless beasts remain eerily compelling, with occasional flashes of unexpected whimsy. Her standing figures, ninety-five strong, are adorned with subtle geometric designs, outlined in linear piping. And a set of animal heads, including the rhinoceroslike "Artumatibi" and the unicornlike "Artumaai," seem fanciful as well as solemn, like trophies mounted in an existentialist hunting lodge. Through Oct. 28. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900.)

DAN FLAVIN
If you can't make it to Marfa, Texas, for the Flavin retrospective, this superb selection of six fluorescent-light sculptures from the sixties should tide you over. Included is a 1964 work dedicated to Donald Judd, four white tubes installed in the corner at a forty-five-degree angle. Though Flavin, a consummate minimalist, was committed to materials that were "anonymous and without glory," there is a poetry in his austerity. Through Nov. 4. (Zwirner and Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 517-8677.)

"IN ITS OWN WAY"
Family is the theme of this thoughtful six-artist show. Despite the coy title, which echoes Tolstoy's famous line about unhappy ones, the households represented seem functional and even loving. Most memorable are the self-portraits painted by Katy Schneider and Dennis Kardon, both of whom make cluttered, crowded interiors feel sweetly celebratory. While Kardon shows himself receiving an awkwardly Freudian smooch from the naked tot in his arms, Schneider, hugely pregnant at her kitchen easel, seems quietly heroic, an icon of maternal multitasking. Through Oct. 31. (Makor, 35 W. 67th St. 601-1000.)

Short List

IKI DE SAINT PHALLE
ickards, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St.
24-0858. Through Oct. 14.

ARK DI SUVERO
anese, 41 E. 57th Street. 223-2227.
rough Oct. 21.

HARLES GOLDMAN
Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St.
879-3500. Through Oct. 21.

JULES OLITSKI
Ameringer/Howard Fine Art, 41 E. 57th St.
935-1110. Through Oct. 21.

RICHARD POUSETTE-DART
Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.
Through Nov. 11.

GERHARD RICHTER
Mathes, 41 E. 57th St. 752-5135.
Through Oct. 21.

BRIDGET RILEY
Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.
Through Oct. 21.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

DAMIEN HIRST
The Brit-pack gang leader's last New York show was decidedly underwhelming; Hirst has clearly decided not to let that happen again. Everything about this exhibition is determinedly spectacular,

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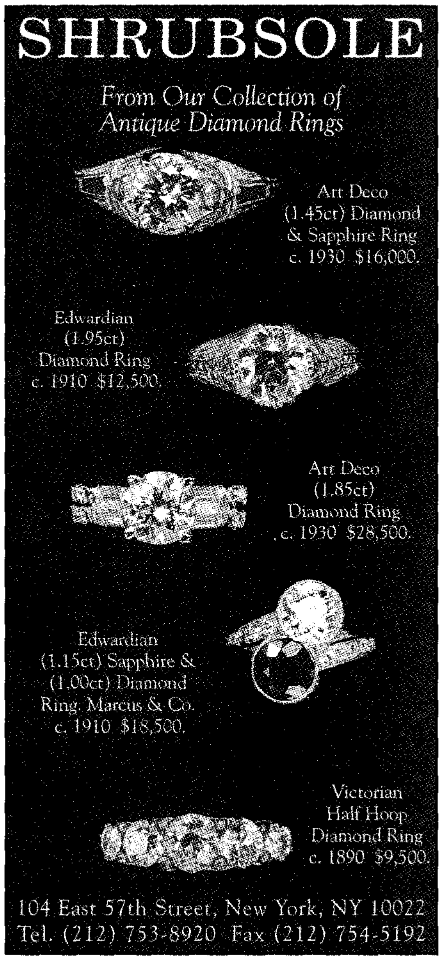
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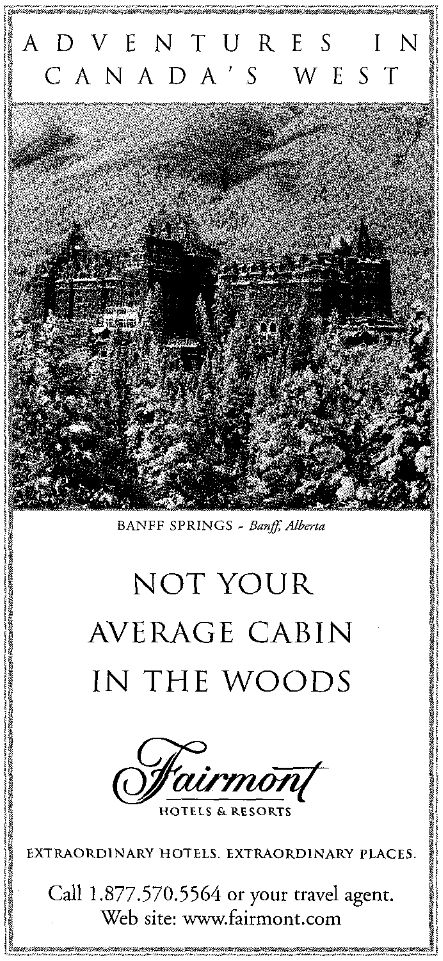
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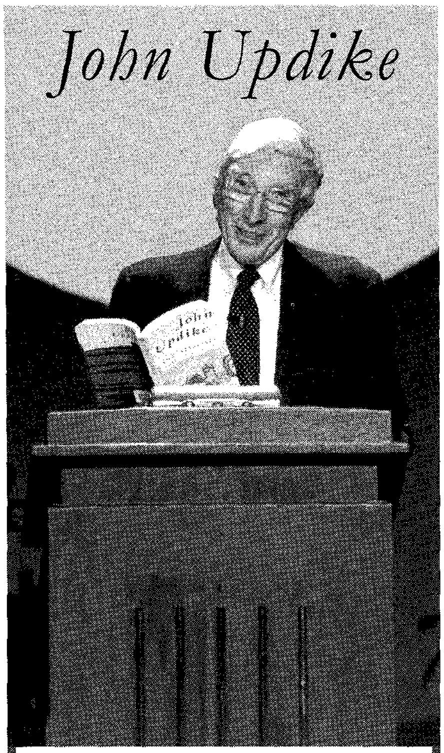

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ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

The Election Collection

Political pundits who fret over the American electorate's lack of enthusiasm point to shrinking voter rolls and low Election Day turnout. But there's even stronger proof: the disappearance of the campaign-themed collectibles that made past elections so lively.

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ELEANOR
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I LIKE IKE

Among the Mothra statuettes and mid-century jukeboxes crowding the dusty aisles at **DARROWS FUN ANTIQUES** (1101 First Ave.; 838-0730), there's a set of twenty-five buttons from the nineteen-forties that would warm the heart of a hard-line No Third Termer. The pin-back buttons offer sharp criticism of the Roosevelts: one shows the words "New Deal" stuffed in a trash bin, while another reads "Eleanor, start packing" ($1,000). The same amount will buy a full complement of Barry Goldwater memorabilia: twelve pins, among them the classic "AuH_2O in 1964," plus a Goldwater-Miller paper hat, a banner advertising Gold Water soft drink ("The Right Drink for the Conservative Taste"), and even an extremely rare can of the stuff itself, which prompted Lyndon Johnson to release his own beverage, Johnson Juice.

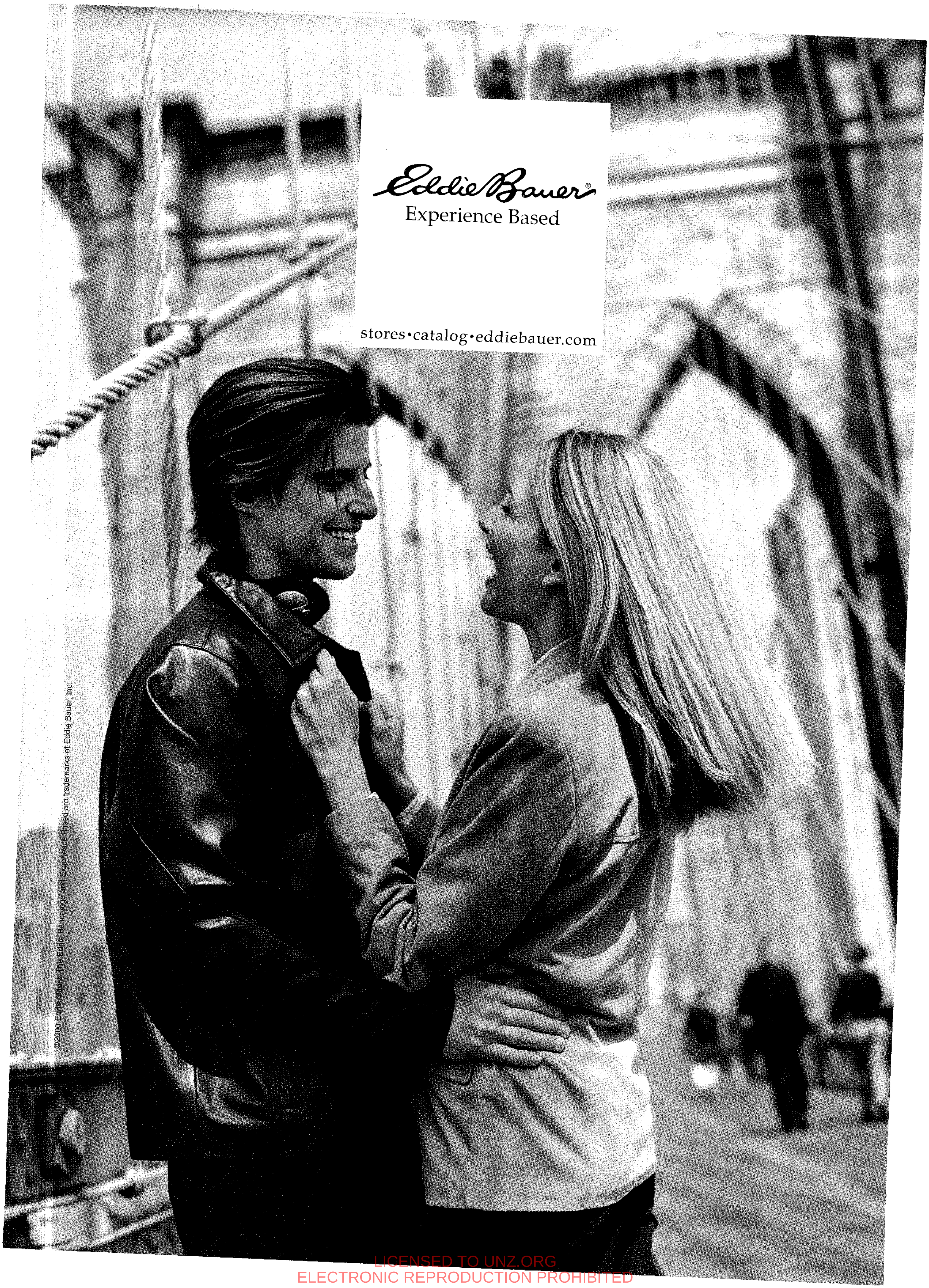
Twenty blocks uptown and a world away, the hushed confines of the **KENNETH W. RENDELL GALLERY** (989 Madison Ave.; 717-1776) offer exquisitely framed autographs of seven presidents. "Eight," the salesman says, "if you count Stephen Austin." The notable Texan, the prime mover behind the birth of the Lone Star Republic, signed his name to an 1836 promissory note that goes for $5,750. Other John Hancocks include the signatures of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison side by side on a Presidential land grant of November, 1807; the shop is offering this document, framed along with portraits of both personages, for $17,500. The autographs at **CARL BURNSTEIN'S** booth in the Chelsea Antiques Building (110 W. 25th St.; 929-0909) have neither mat nor frame, and their prices reflect their unadorned state: a small scrap bearing the elegant signature of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, without whom half the nation might not have the franchise, costs $160.

The insouciant **LOVES SAVES THE DAY** (119 Second Ave., 228-3802) (a sign on the door says, "Unattended children will be sold as slaves") is busy preparing for the Halloween season, but a small case in the back of the shop contains several examples of Kennedy mementos (and memento mori), including a bank shaped like a silver dollar ($25) and a jelly glass decorated with black-and-white commemorative decals ($10). At **THE OLD PAPER ARCHIVE** (122 W. 25th St.; 645-3983), a woven silk portrait bearing a likeness of Martha Washington is $50, and a pair of John and Abigail Adams paper dolls, torn from a 1925 issue of *McCall's*, whose austere expressions make them unlikely playmates, is $35.

Things are a bit giddier at the **COLLECTOR'S WAREHOUSE OUTLET** in the New York Antique Center (26 W. 25th St.; 206-1045), where a little-known paperback by W. C. Fields entitled "Fields for President" is, at least according to its cover, "the most memorable book of the 1972 campaign!" ($15). A rhinestone "Ike" brooch that no doubt once enlivened a Republican cloth coat is $28 (one stone is missing). And the White House itself turns up in two incarnations: as an early nineteen-sixties glass Avon perfume bottle ($28) and inside a nineteen-thirties snow globe whose flakes are, after seventy years, as cloudy as many a Beltway reputation ($64).

—*Lynn Yaeger*

EDEL RODRIGUEZ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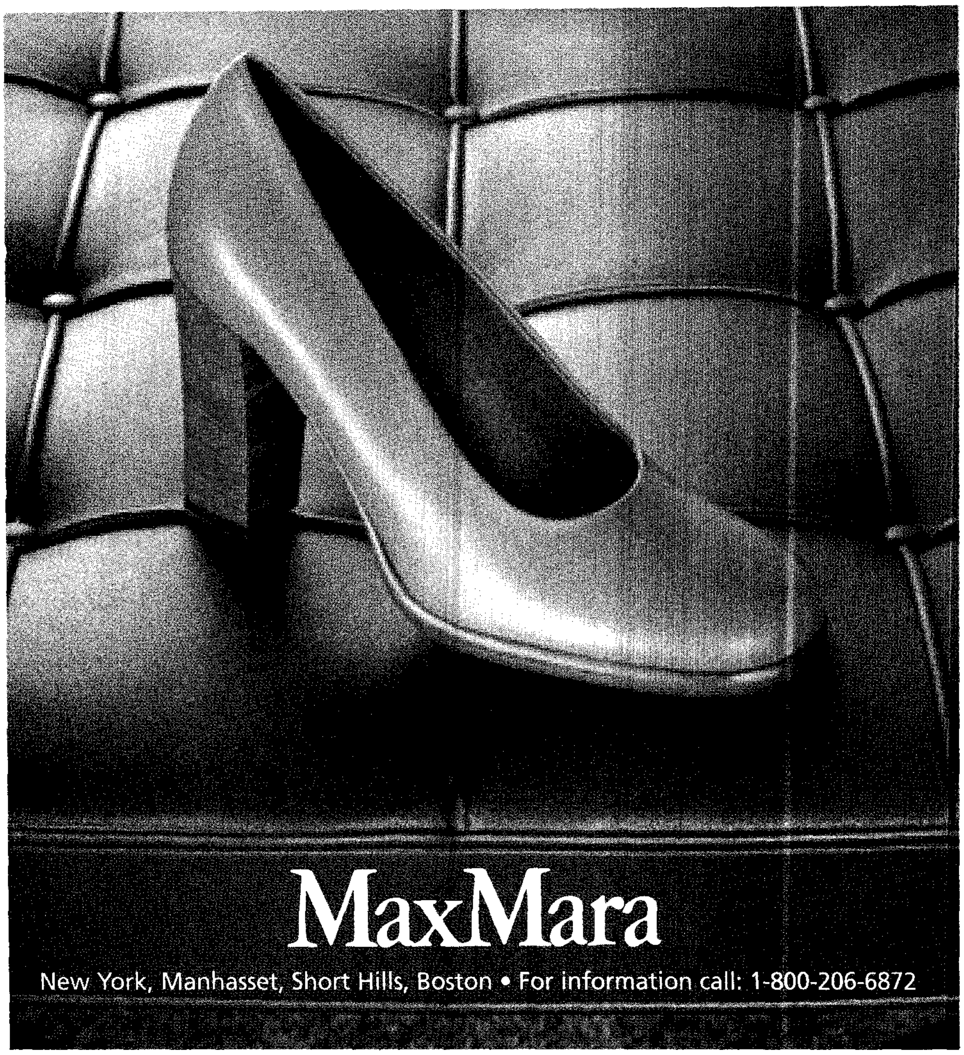
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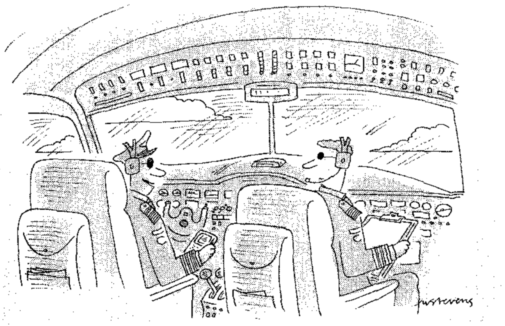

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from its square footage to its gargantuan budget and run-on title: "Theories, Models, Methods, Approaches, Assumptions, Results, and Findings." The result is a cross between a science museum, a morgue, and a slasher-movie set. The artist has filled more than eleven vitrines with skeletons, medical instruments, tropical fish, laboratory dioramas, and, as a leitmotif, Ping-Pong balls levitating on electric blowers—Hirst's symbol for the randomness, or perhaps the fragility, of life. Towering above it all is "Hymn," a twenty-foot bronze enlargement of an anatomical model, with cheerfully polychromed entrails. Few of the individual components carry much metaphorical weight, but there remains something fundamentally pleasing about the spectacle of a simple obsession so massively indulged ("I just want to find out about rotting," Hirst has said). Through Dec. 16. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.)

MEL LEIPZIG
Wonderfully warts-and-all portraits of the artist's friends and family in suburban New Jersey. The fish-eye perspective and the habit of making subjects appear fleshy and unprepossessing recall Lucian Freud, but Leipzig's profusion of messy detail—the stacks of files and stuffed U-Haul boxes in "Lou" or the catalogue of bedroom graffiti in "Joshua's Tattoos"—are miles from Freud's dissecting-table approach. The curators want to compare the œuvre with the weirdness of David Lynch, but the familiar and darkly comic calamities in David Gates's "Jernigan" seem closer to home. Through Oct. 19. (Gallery Henoch, 555 W. 25th St. 966-6360.)

YOSHIYUKI MIURA
Miura describes his work as the "liberation" of stone: he shatters blocks of granite and hangs fragments from the ceiling by wire, suspended in gently swaying planes of rocks. The first of two pieces here bisects the gallery with a triangle of what looks like pebble-strewn spiderweb. In the back, a chandelierlike cone hovers just above viewers' heads. Any breeze sets off a gentle, swaying movement, and any change of vantage point makes the screenlike shape shift from seemingly solid to almost transparent. Through Oct. 14. (Von Lintel and Nusser, 555 W. 25th St. 242-0599.)

JANE AND LOUISE WILSON
The Wilsons document power structures in the literal sense, visiting closed government and defense sites with their video cameras. Recently, they've been filming a Russian space-training center outside Moscow, and footage from "Star City" plays here on two pairs of eight-by-ten-foot freestanding screens, positioned so that viewers can get all four in their field of vision at once. Their subjects, totalitarian military architecture (which turns out to be not so different from democratic military architecture) and space technology in various states of repair, are perfect for the Wilsons' unusually cinematic treatment—one expects to see Harrison Ford jumping out from behind a rocket. Through Nov. 4. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

Short List

DARREN ALMOND
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.
Through Oct. 28.

ISA GENZKEN
AC Project Room, 453 W. 17th St.
645-4970. Through Nov. 18.

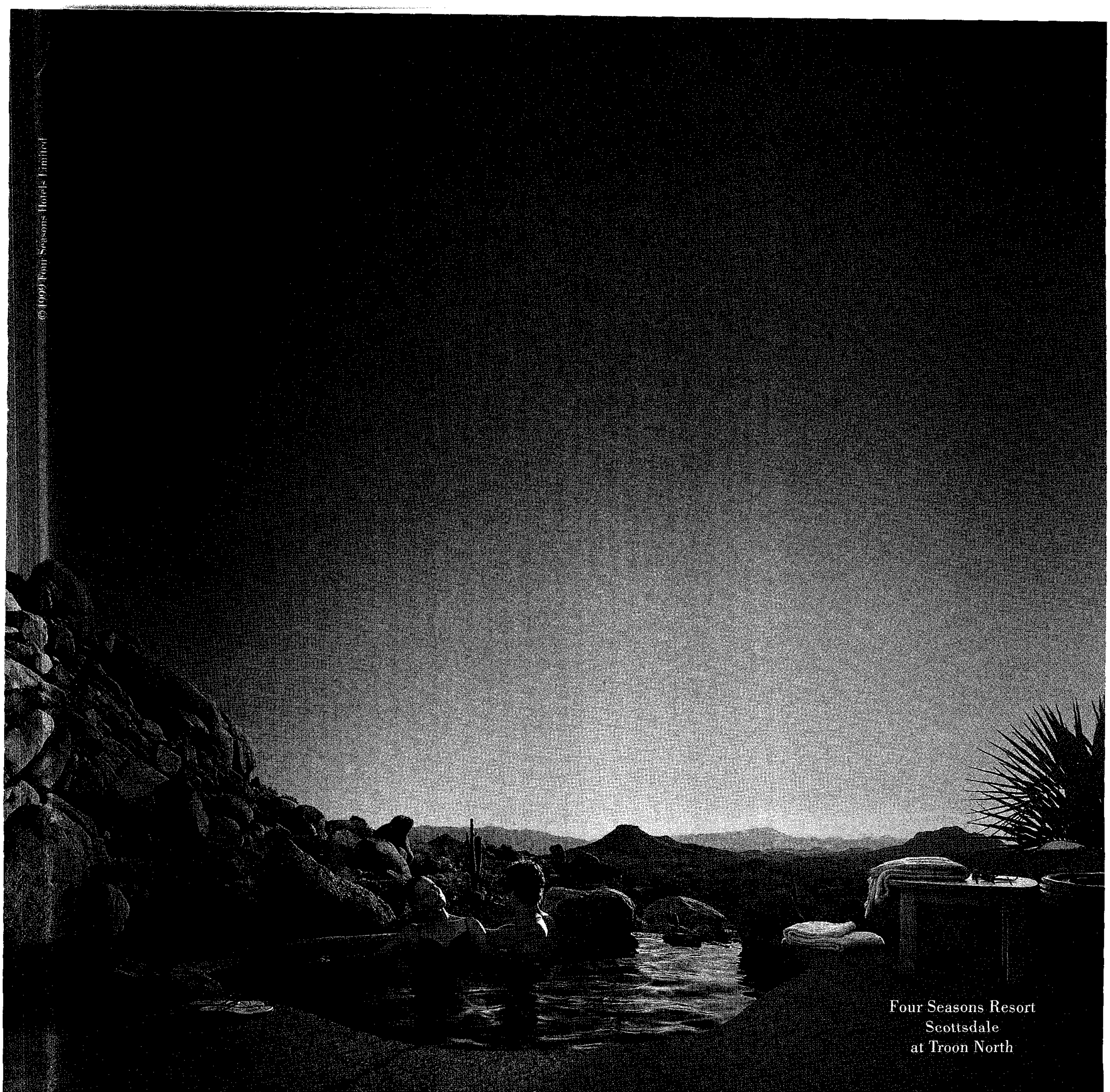
MARTIN KIPPENBERGER
Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.
Through Nov. 4.

HIRONORI MURAI
Liebman Magnan, 552 W. 24th St.
255-3225. Through Oct. 14.

KARIM NOURELDIN
Schoormans, 508 W. 26th St. 243-3159.
Through Oct. 21.

MEG WEBSTER
Paula Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.
Through Oct. 14.

RACHEL WHITEREAD
Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St.
206-9100. Through Oct. 14.



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GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

NICOLE EISENMAN
A helicopter crashes in Antarctica, and the dazed male survivors are hunted down by a tribe of glamorous cannibal lesbians: who but Eisenman could offer us such sardonic sublimities, painted with a reckless but surprisingly deft hand? Characteristically, this show is laid out like a studio tour: first come drawings, clippings, and ephemera. Once she has set an appropriately raunchy, frivolous tone, the artist raises the stakes in larger and ever-goofier canvases, culminating in a thirty-foot mural of the anthropophagettes feasting in their icy lair. Through Oct. 14. (Tilton, 47 Greene St. 941-1775.)

Short List

ENZO CUCCHI
Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300.
Through Oct. 28.
CHRISTINE HILL
Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.
Through Oct. 14.

PHOTOGRAPHY

LOIS CONNER
For most of the last fifteen years, Conner has been travelling in China with a seven-by-seventeen-inch panoramic camera. Her wide black-and-white images present the conditions of contemporary Chinese life with the stark formality of traditional Chinese scrolls. One three-exposure composite of Hong Kong, with a hundred-and-eighty-degree view, uses hundreds of lifeless windows to suggest both the presence and absence of that island's densely packed population. A series on the lotus blossom links botanical photography with Asian iconography—pictures of the flower blooming and decaying in rural ponds hang alongside, and are echoed by, images of walls and gates decorated with its image. Through Oct. 28. (Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.)

SAUL FLETCHER
Joseph Beuys might have enjoyed Fletcher's photography—both men imbue their work with a mythic quality, and both use dead rabbits and empty suits to do so. Fletcher set up and photographed these nineteen small tableaux (none is bigger than eight by seven inches) in a small room of his London home, with a collection of domestic and organic props which includes string, dried flowers, and a pair of stilts. The resulting pictures read like a series of interior nocturnes. Through Oct. 21. (Kern, 558 Broadway. 965-1706.)

JOAN FONTCUBERTA
This Spanish artist is showing work in two mediums of his own devising: the lactogram, for which nursing mothers express breast milk onto acetate negatives, and the hemogram, which uses drops of blood. It's not necessary to puzzle out Fontcuberta's weighty explanations for these techniques, which are full of good intentions and theoretical claims, to enjoy the otherworldly beauty of his large prints; the best hemograms look like million-dollar sashimi. More conventional black-and-white prints of Braille text, with the feel of sci-fi moonscapes, fill out the room. Through Nov. 1. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

MATHEW H. M. LEE AND NAM JUNE PAIK
Dr. Mathew H. M. Lee of New York University's Chronic Pain Laboratory collaborated with Nam June Paik on these spooky infrared photographs of heads, hands, and feet in the midst of aches and twinges. Paik claims his interest in working with Dr. Lee has to do with acupuncture and chi points, but it seems simpler than that—the freaked-out futurism of medical imaging looks a lot like Paik's own video and neon work. In the end, these "pictures of pain," as the gallery describes them, are much prettier, if less informative, than the average podiatrist's ad. Through Oct. 24. (Goodman, 41 E. 57th St. 593-3737.)

DAIN L. TASKER
Tasker, a Los Angeles radiologist and amateur photographer, took these X-ray photographs of flowers in the nineteen-thirties. Rather than displaying the X-rays, he used them as negatives, producing prints with such delicate lines that petals appear as wisps of gray smoke. Technological novelty never overwhelms the images, but it does allow Tasker, who professed an interest in "the love life of plants," to show a calla-lily stamen's alarmingly full length and to make "Wide Open Lotus" particularly suggestive. Through Oct. 14. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

CHRIS VERENE
Chris Verene, one of the darlings of this year's Whitney Biennial, follows that success with two linked shows. At Paul Morris, "Grandpa Bill" looks in on Verene's widowed grandfather at home in Florida, visited occasionally by his similarly aged housekeeper. At American Fine Arts, selections from Verene's ongoing project "Galesburg" document the intertwining small-town dramas of his Galesburg, Illinois, family, friends, and neighbors—Grandpa comes to visit, Cousin Steve gets divorced, and Cousin Candi gets married. Verene, whose piercingly tender indoor portraits recall Nan Goldin and William Eggleston, doesn't flatter but is not unkind. His handwritten captions make the story so accessible that by the time viewers get to the formal "My Cousin Candi's Wedding with Her Two Favorite Customers from Her Job at the Sirloin Stockade," a face or two may look familiar. (Through Oct. 28 at Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through Nov. 11 at American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St. 941-0401.)

NEIL WINOKUR
Winokur's studio pictures of small New York City-themed items are so soft and color saturated that they look like old Hollywood Technicolor. The results are mixed—a Metrocard on a rosy background looks surprisingly handsome, as do pictures of a mustard-smeared hot dog and a "We are happy to serve you" coffee cup. The elevation of current-day detritus to iconic status might've made a good game, but the inclusion of nostalgic ephemera from Broadway and Yankee Stadium makes the gallery start to look like a pricey souvenir shop. Through Oct. 28. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—**"Eugène Atget: The Pioneer."** Through Jan. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

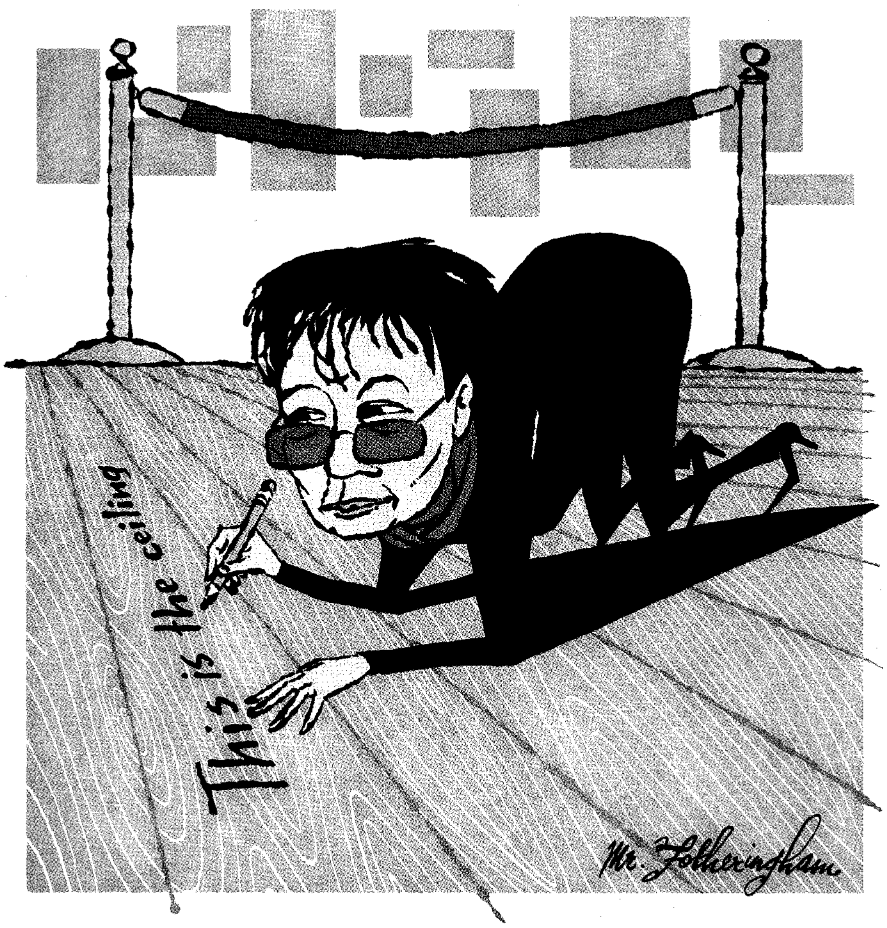
Short List

PINO DAL GAL
De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.
Through Oct. 28.
RINEKE DIJKSTRA
Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.
Through Oct. 28.
ROBERT FRANK
Scalo, 560 Broadway. 334-9393. Through Oct. 21.
TOM WOOD
Erben, 516 W. 20th St. 645-8701.
Through Nov. 4.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Whitney Museum, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
The Met continues performances of its fall operas: **"Samson et Dalila,"** with Plácido Domingo; conducted by Mark Elder. (Oct. 11 at 7:30, Oct. 14 at 1, and Oct. 19 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Turandot,"** with Franco



"Yes Yoko Ono," a retrospective of works by the artist, at the Japan Society.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

Zeffirelli's grandiose set designs, features Sharon Sweet in the title role on Oct. 12, while Alessandra Marc takes over on Oct. 16 and Oct. 20, followed by Jane Eaglen on Oct. 24; all performances, at 8 P.M., are conducted by Marco Armiliato. ♦ The première of Beethoven's **"Fidelio,"** with Karita Mattila, Jennifer Welch, and Ben Heppner; James Levine. (Oct. 13 at 8, Oct. 17 at 8, and Oct. 21 at 8:30.) ♦ **"Don Giovanni,"** with Renée Fleming; Mr. Levine. (Oct. 14 at 8, Oct. 18 at 8, and Oct. 21 at 1.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Olga Borodina and Roberto Alagna; Bertrand de Billy. (Oct. 23 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Oct. 13 at 8 and Oct. 19 at 7:30: **"La Traviata,"** with Virginia Grasso, Gerard Powers, and Brian Davis; conducted by Joseph Rescigno. ♦ Oct. 11 at 7:30 and Oct. 14 at 8: **"Madama Butterfly,"** with Susan Bullock and Andrew Richards; Jorge Mester. ♦ Oct. 14 at 1:30, Oct. 20 at 8, and Oct. 22 at 1:30: **"Le Nozze di Figaro."** ♦ Oct. 12 at 7:30, Oct. 15 at 1:30, and Oct. 18 at 7:30: Benjamin Britten's 1954 adaptation of Henry James's ghost story, **"The Turn of the Screw,"** featuring the soprano Amy Burton in the role of the governess; Stewart Robertson. ♦ Oct. 17 at 7:30 and Oct. 21 at 1:30: Sergei Prokofiev's **"The Love for Three Oranges,"** featuring Kathleen Brett, Matthew Chellis, Kathryn Day, and Linda Roark-Strummer; George Manahan. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

ZHANG JIQING
Mme. Zhang, one of the premier performers in the Kunqu Theatre of China, makes her American début in the Kunqu Society's production of Lanke Shan's "The Ballad of Broken Ax Mountain." (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Oct. 13 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Oct. 12-14 at 8 and Oct. 17 at 7:30: Leonard Slatkin continues Kurt Masur's recent Mendelssohn bent (performing the Piano Concerto in G Minor, with the soloist Mitsuko Uchida) but mixes in Dvořák's Symphony No. 8 and Bernstein's "Jeremiah" Symphony (with mezzo-soprano Rinat Shaham). ♦ Oct. 19 at 8, Oct. 20 at 11 A.M., and Oct. 21 at 8: Marcello Viotti conducts Chausson's Symphony in B-Flat Major, along with Saint-Saëns's Violin Concerto No. 3 (with Nikolaj Znaider) and Respighi's "Belfagor" Overture. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S
An all-Brahms program containing the "Alto Rhapsody" (with mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore and the Men of the New York Concert Singers) and the Third and Fourth Symphonies; Sir Charles Mackerras conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 11 at 8.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA
Dennis Russell Davies conducts the "Pacifica" segment of the orchestra's "Twentieth-Century Snapshots" series, leading new works by Asian-American composers Melissa Hui, Chinary Ung, and P. Q. Phan, as well as Lou Harrison's Piano Concerto (with Ursula Oppens). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 15 at 3.)

NDR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
The NDR, one of Europe's outstanding radio orchestras, makes its only New York appearance this season, with conductor Christoph Eschenbach and soloist Midori in a program of Brahms, Weber, and Tchaikovsky (the Violin Concerto). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 16 at 8.)

WESTMINSTER ABBEY CHOIR
James O'Donnell, the latest in a tradition of choirmasters which stretches back to 1479, leads the famed ensemble of men and boys in what should be an ideal setting. (St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, 1 W. 53rd St. 664-9360; donation suggested. Oct. 17 at 7:30.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
For a program titled "Remembrance of Things Past: Music as Reminiscence," Leon Botstein conducts Mahler's Symphony No. 7. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Oct. 20 at 8.)

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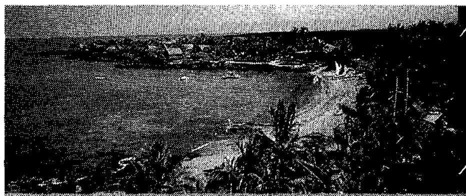
Top: *Female Dancer*, China, Western Han dynasty, 2nd–1st century B.C., Charlotte C. and John C. Weber Collection, Gift of Charlotte C. and John C. Weber, 1992; *Gravestone with Bust of a Man*, Palmyra (Syria), 2nd century A.D., Purchase, 1898; and *Portrait Statue of a Boy*, Roman, Augustan period, late 1st century B.C.–early 1st century A.D., Rogers Fund, 1914. Bottom: *Plaque with Royal Family*, India (West Bengal), Shunga period, 1st century B.C., Purchase, Florence and Herbert Irving Gift, 1992; *Funerary Mask*, Colombia (Calima), llama period, 1st century B.C., Jan Mitchell and Sons Collection, Gift of Jan Mitchell, 1991; and *Mummy Mask of a Woman with a Jeweled Garland*, Egypt, probably Meir, ca. A.D. 60–70, Rogers Fund, 1919. All works from The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



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RECITALS

"NOONDAY CONCERTS"
Oct. 12 at 1: The New York Scandia Symphony Orchestra performs works by Sigurd Islandmoen, Johann Helmich Roman, and Edvard Grieg. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Admission by contribution.) ♦ Oct. 16 at noon: Oboist Mark Snyder, violist Stephanie Griffin, and pianist Marija Ilic play works by Gershwin, Piazzola, and others. (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. Admission by contribution.)

Chris Verene's "Josh and His Girlfriend," at American Fine Arts (see Photography).

MAURIZIO POLLINI
The pianist is joined by the Emerson String Quartet in a program of works by Kurtág, Bartók, Chopin, and Liszt. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 12 at 8.)

MARILYN NONKEN
The pianist offers works by Charles Ives and Michael Finnissy. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Oct. 12 at 8.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG
The long-running vocal-music series focusses its talents on the standards of Hoagy Carmichael, Harry Warren, and Harold Arlen. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, 68th St. between Park and Lexington Aves. 772-4448. Oct. 12 at 8.)

"ART OF THE SONG"
The bass-baritone José van Dam and the pianist Maciej Pikulski present two programs of French song. Oct. 12 at 8: Works by Duparc, Fauré, Poulenc, Ravel, and Ropartz. ♦ Oct. 15 at 2: More Duparc and Poulenc, along with Berlioz, Debussy, and Ibert. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050.)

PHILHARMONIA QUARTETT BERLIN
The string quartet, drawn from the top ranks of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, makes its Weill Recital Hall début with a program of works by Mozart, Szymanowski (the Quartet No. 2), and Reger (the Quartet in D Minor, Op. 74). (247-7800. Oct. 13 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
The Society opens its subscription season with a Bruce Adolphe world première ("A Thousand Years of Love," featuring soprano Sylvia McNair), Dvořák's "American" Quartet, and Stephen Taylor soloing in J. S. Bach's Concerto for Oboe d'Amore. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Oct. 15 at 5 and Oct. 17 at 7:30.)

EVGENY KISSIN
The dynamic Russian pianist plays sonatas by Beethoven and Brahms, and Schumann's "Carnaval." (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 14 at 7:30.)

"PIPES SPECTACULAR!"
The New York City organists Ken Cowan, Marianne Decker, Gregory Eaton, Paul Richard Olson, and Peter Stolzfus gather at Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims for what is billed as the world's largest organ concert (similar events are taking place simultaneously in more than two hundred cities). Highlights include works by Bach, Copland, and Fauré, as well as a post-concert tour of the inner workings of the four-thousand-pipe 1937 Aeolian-Skinner organ. (75 Hicks St., Brooklyn. 718-403-9546. Oct. 15 at 6.)

LARK STRING QUARTET
The inconoclastic young Italian composer and cellist Giovanni Sollima joins the ensemble for the première of his eighty-minute quintet "Viaggio in Italia" ("A Journey in Italy"), commissioned in honor of the eightieth anniversary of Buccellati, a distinguished Milanese house of jewellers and silversmiths currently enjoying a retrospective of their work at the Smithsonian. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 17 at 7:30.)

ELEFTHERIA KOTZIA
The Greek guitarist presents works by Villa-Lobos, Tavener, and Piazzolla, among others. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 19 at 8.)

DAVID UERKVITZ AND SHU-WEI TSENG
The duo-piano team make their New York City début with works by Soler, Infante, and Rachmaninoff (the Symphonic Dances, usually heard with orchestra). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 20 at 8.)

LEON BATES
The well-known American pianist makes his début solo recital at Carnegie Hall, with works by Barber, Copland, Takemitsu, and MacDowell. (247-7800. Oct. 22 at 8.)

MURRAY PERAHIA
The pianist presents Bach's "Goldberg Variations," along with the Bach-Busoni Four Chorale Preludes. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Oct. 22 at 3.)

DA CAPO CHAMBER PLAYERS
"Leafy Speafing," a remembrance of the late New York composer Stephen Albert, includes several works by him and his composer colleagues; soprano Lucy Shelton assists the ensemble in the third concert of the Sonic Boom 2000 Festival, which begins with a gala concert on Oct. 20. (The Great Hall, Cooper Union, 7th St. at Third Ave. 279-4200. Oct. 23 at 8.)

MIMI STILLMAN
The young flutist, in her New York début recital, premières a work by twenty-three-year-old Mason Bates, who has just been named as the 2000-02 composer-in-residence of Young Concert Artists. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 23 at 8.)

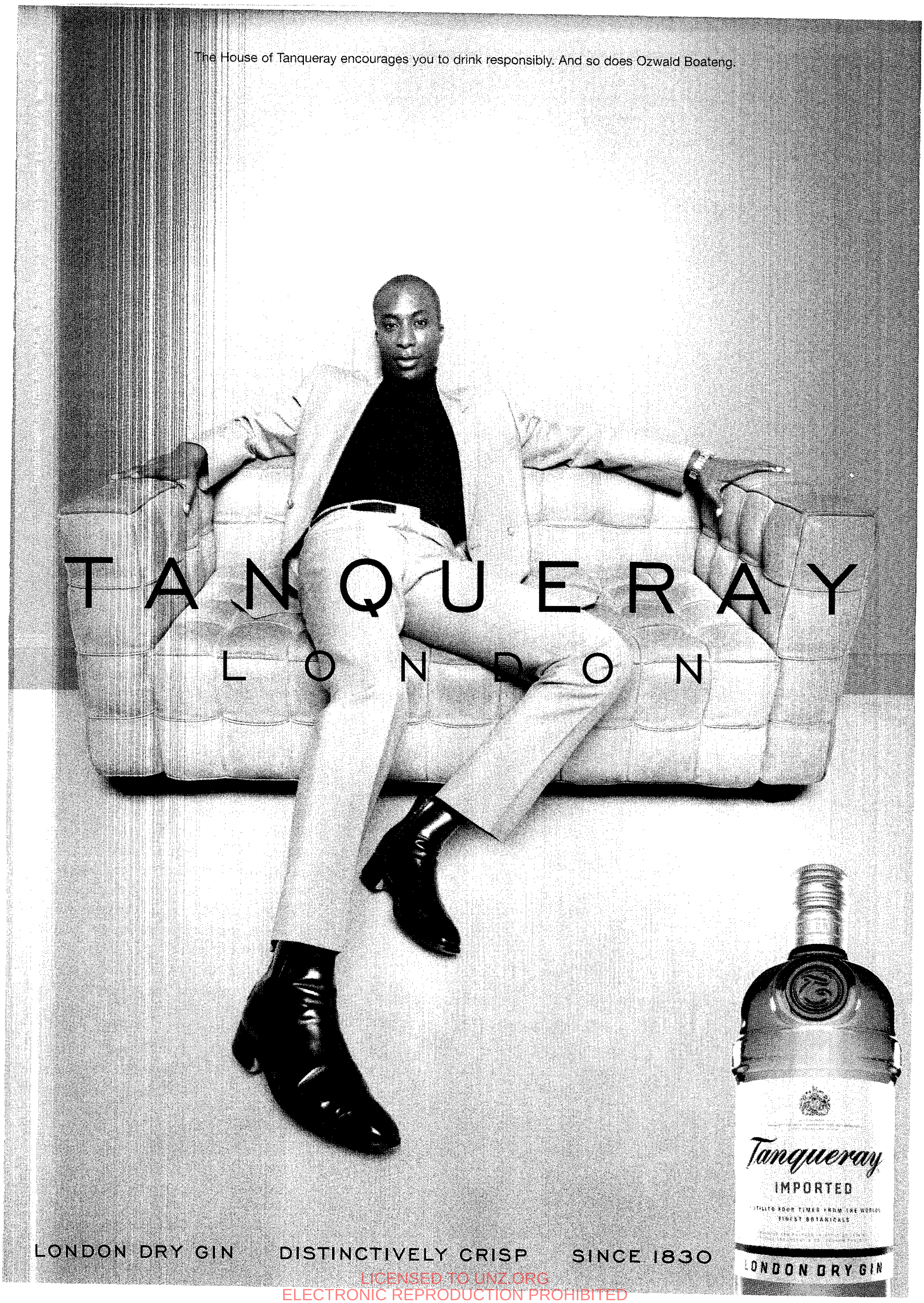
HUELGAS ENSEMBLE
In a presentation of the Gotham Early Music Foundation, the noted chamber choir marks the five-hundredth birthday of the Hapsburg emperor Charles V with a program of sacred polyphony from his time. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University. 854-7799. Oct. 24 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Oct. 11 at 4: By Eugenía Parry, from her novel "Crime Album Stories." (Uris Auditorium, Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 81st St. 879-5500.) ♦ Oct. 11 at 8: David Lehman, the series editor for the "Best American Poetry" anthologies, hosts a reading celebrating this year's edition, with Dorothea Tanning, David Yau, Michael Anderson, and others. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Oct. 13 at 7: By Carmela Ciuraru, Vijay Seshadri, Marie Howe, and other contributors to the anthology "First Loves: Poets Introduce the Poems That Captivated and Inspired Them," which was edited by Ciuraru. (National Arts Club. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Oct. 16 at 8: By the novelists Kazuo Ishiguro and Michael Ondaatje, from their recent work. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) ♦ Oct. 17 at 7: By poets Jessica Greenbaum and Jeffrey Harrison. (Nexus Gallery, 345 E. 12th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Oct. 18 at 7: The writers Peter Matthiessen, Frank McCourt, and Grace Paley join Arthur Miller for an evening celebrating his eighty-fifth birthday. (Music Building, Queens College, Flushing. For more information, call 718-997-4646.)

TALKS
Oct. 12 at 6:30: Alison Maddex, director of the Museum of Sex, joins Carol Groneman, the author of "Nymphomania: A History," and the historian Richard Rabinowitz for an illustrated lecture on the history of sex in New York City. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Oct. 12 at 7: Kenn Kaufman, a naturalist as well as a field editor for *Audubon* magazine, explains how amateur ornithology can change your life. (American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. 769-5100.) ♦ Oct. 19 at 7: John Szarkowski, director of photography emeritus at the Museum of Modern Art, discusses the influence of Eugène Atget on Walker Evans. (International Center of Photography, Fifth Ave. at 94th St. 860-1777.) ♦ Oct. 23 at 6: The writer Ian Buruma delivers a lecture titled "The Future of Language and the Dominance of English." (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 930-0571.)

WALK
Oct. 18 at 10 A.M.: The Regional Plan Association offers a tour of Governor's Island. For more information, call 253-2727, ext. 393.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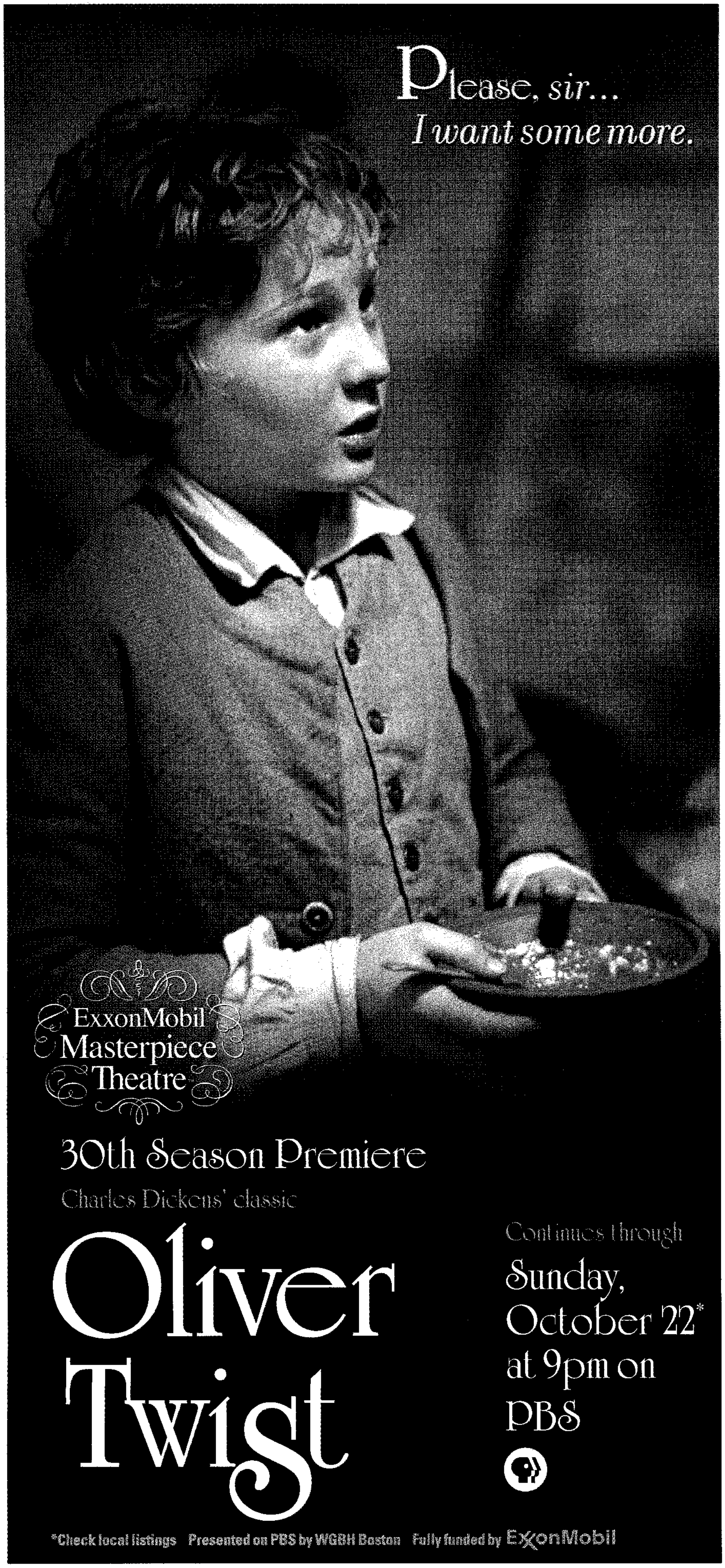
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BOOK CURRENTS

Strange But Not Quite True

A few summers ago, a shopper walking through a parking lot encountered a woman sitting perfectly still in her car, her hand pressed to the back of her head. "I've been shot!" the woman said, explaining that she was holding her hand to her head so that her brains would not fall out. When paramedics arrived, they peeled the victim's hand away to reveal a glob of white matter in her hair. Checking the back seat, they discovered the unlikely culprit: an exploded tube of Pillsbury Poppin' Fresh biscuit dough.

Urban legends like this one are the kind of thing you tend to hear around the office water cooler, but they're the stuff of amusing scholarship, too. The Pillsbury "Brain Drain" story—and its curious, elusive history—turned up recently in **THE TRUTH NEVER STANDS IN THE WAY OF A GOOD STORY** (University of Illinois), an in-depth exploration of urban legends by University of Utah professor emeritus Jan Harold Brunvand. He has made a career of collecting, analyzing, and cataloguing these legends, from stories of alligators in the sewers to tales of spider-egg-infested bubble gum. The Canadian writer N. E. Genge, in her **URBAN LEGENDS** (Three Rivers), cites Brunvand as the "grandmaster of urban folklore" while offering breezy retellings grouped under headings like sex, medicine, college mayhem, and, of course, celebrity—both with gerbils and without. And Thomas J. Craughwell, in **THE BABY ON THE CAR ROOF** (Black Dog & Leventhal), shows that urban legends evolve with time and technology, clogging fax machines and E-mail in-boxes with accounts of exploding cell phones and Martha Stewart clones. But, according to Craughwell, one thing hasn't changed: "We all know that urban legends are not true, except for the one we believe in."

—*Mark Rozzo*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Books.

[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

Stories of a Lifetime

BABYFACE: A STORY OF HEART AND BONES

by Jeanne McDermott

This moving story explores how one woman's ideas and definition of perfection and wholeness are challenged when her son is born with Apert syndrome, a rare craniofacial condition. Along the difficult and frustrating journey she and her family undertake, she discovers the greatest rewards lie in the transforming powers of love and the joy of simply being alive. (Woodbine)

Pub. Price: $22.95

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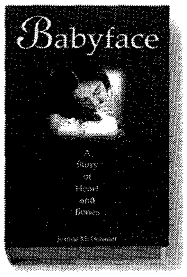
Our Price: $18.36



IN MY BROTHER'S IMAGE

by Eugene L. Pogany

This infinitely disturbing story centers on the destruction of the close childhood bond of identical twins, born in Hungary of Jewish parents but raised as Catholic converts until World War II unravels their family. As adults, each believes the other to be a traitor to their family's faith as one returns to Judaism and the other becomes a Catholic priest. (Viking)

Pub. Price: $25.95

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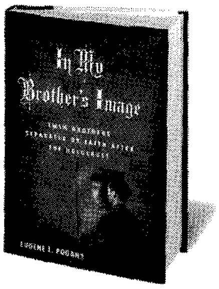

THE BLOOD RUNS LIKE A RIVER THROUGH MY DREAMS

by Nasdijj

A profound and deeply moving odyssey through the beauty of Native American culture, this poignant memoir of a nomadic man, who has survived a life pinioned between two separate cultures, resonates with grace, compassion and hope. (Houghton Mifflin)

Pub. Price: $23.00

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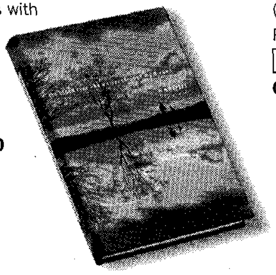

THE BLOOD OF STRANGERS: STORIES FROM EMERGENCY MEDICINE

by Frank Huyler

Sharing deep insight and unflinchingly real experience, Dr. Frank Huyler brings a complex array of characters to life from the fascinating but grisly life-and-death world of ER medicine. (Owl Books)

Pub. Price: $13.00

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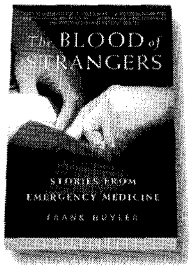

BLACKBIRD: A CHILDHOOD LOST

by Jennifer Lauck

Alternately inspiring and heartbreaking, this mesmerizing debut about a young girl's life at the turn of the 1970s follows the circumstances of her lost childhood as she watches her beloved mother battle a mysterious illness. (Pocket Books)

Pub. Price: $23.95

Discount **20%**

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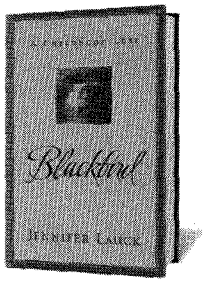


THE COOPER'S WIFE IS MISSING: THE TRIALS OF BRIDGET CLEARY

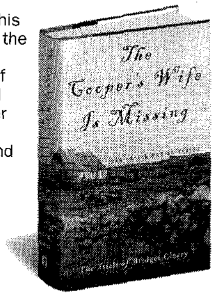
by Joan Hoff & Marian Yeates

Steeped in superstition and pagan rituals, this tale—set in 1895 Ireland—revolves around the murder trial stemming from the torture and death of a young woman unjustly accused of witchcraft. The case's resulting political and religious implications further strain the bitter sentiments between the Catholic and Protestant communities and reach far beyond the scene of the crime. (Basic Books)

Pub. Price: $26.00

Discount **20%**

Our Price: $20.80



TODAY I AM A BOY

by David Hays

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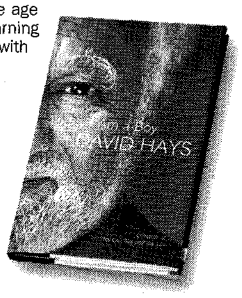

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MOVIES OPENING

ANIMAL FACTORY
Steve Buscemi directed this story of a young, educated prisoner (Edward Furlong) who must seek protection from the penitentiary's overlord (Willem Dafoe). With Mickey Rourke and Tom Arnold. Opening Oct. 20.

BEDAZZLED
A man (Brendan Fraser) enlists the help of the Devil (Elizabeth Hurley) to win the love of his co-worker (Frances O'Connor) in this remake of the 1967 film. Harold Ramis directed. Opening Oct. 20.

BILLY ELLIOT
Stephen Daldry directed this story of a young boy (Jamie Bell) living in a coal-mining town in northern England who trades his boxing gloves for ballet slippers. With Julie Walters. Opening Oct. 13.

THE CONTENDER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 13.

DR. T AND THE WOMEN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 13.

FOLLOWERS
A drama about college-fraternity hazing directed by Jonathan M. Flicker. Opening Oct. 13.

JUST LOOKING
The coming-of-age story of a fourteen-year-old boy (Ryan Merriman) set in Queens, in 1955. With Gretchen Mol. Directed by Jason Alexander. Opening Oct. 13.

JUST ONE TIME
A soon-to-be-married couple dare each other to sleep with same-sex partners in this romantic comedy directed by Lane Janger. Opening Oct. 20.

THE LADIES MAN
Tim Meadows expands his "Saturday Night Live" skit about a swinging bachelor. Directed by Reginald Hudlin. Opening Oct. 13.

LIVE NUDE GIRLS UNITE!
Exotic dancers fight to unionize in this documentary by Julia Query and Vicky Funari. Opening Oct. 20. (Quad Cinemas.)

LOST SOULS
Satanists attempt to conjure up the Devil in a supernatural thriller with Winona Ryder and Ben Chaplin. Directed by Janusz Kaminski. Opening Oct. 13.

ONE
A drama written and directed by Tony Barbieri about two best friends who drift apart. Opening Oct. 13. (State.)

PAY IT FORWARD
When a teacher (Kevin Spacey) gives an assignment to "make the world a better place," one student (Haley Joel Osment) comes up with a plan to encourage random acts of kindness. With Helen Hunt. Directed by Mimi Leder. Opening Oct. 20.

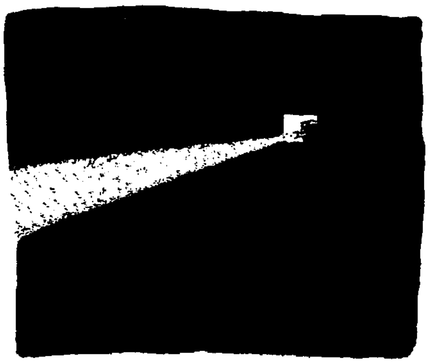
RATCATCHER
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Oct. 13.

THE RED STUFF
A documentary about the cosmonauts and the workings of the Soviet propaganda machine. Directed by Leo de Boer. Opening Oct. 11. (Film Forum.)

SMELL OF CAMPHOR, FRAGRANCE OF JASMINE
Bahman Farmanara directs and plays the main character in this semiautobiographical story of a filmmaker who returns to Iran and becomes obsessed with his own mortality. In Farsi. Opening Oct. 13. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TAVERN
A longtime bartender buys a restaurant in Manhattan in this drama about friendship and the food business. Directed by Walter Foote. Opening Oct. 20.

THE YARDS
James Gray's second feature film, a crime drama set in the underworld of the New York City subway yards, with Mark Wahlberg, James Caan, Joaquin Phoenix, and Charlize Theron. Opening Oct. 20.



FILM NOTES

ALMOST FAMOUS
Cameron Crowe's genial but remarkably undramatic account of his life and not very hard times as a fifteen-year-old rock critic in the early nineteen-seventies. Crowe's stand-in, William Miller (Patrick Fugit), leaves home against the wishes of his college-professor mom (Frances McDormand) when he accepts an assignment from *Rolling Stone* to cover a mid-level band called Stillwater. On the road, he falls into an intense admiration of the good-looking lead guitarist (Billy Crudup) and receives gentle treatment from a trio of groupies, the Band-Aids (led by Kate Hudson). Much of the movie plays easily and well as a record of good times, but there's no particular point to it. William is never put in enough danger—morally, spiritually, sexually, or any other way—to become a hero for us, and the music of Stillwater is not meant to be great. What's at stake?—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/18/00.) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

BABY DOLL
Tennessee Williams' droll and engrossing carnal comedy, set low-down in Mississippi. The infantile, flirtatious heroine (Carroll Baker) sucks her thumb and sleeps in a crib. Her balding, middle-aged husband (Karl Malden) has agreed not to consummate the marriage until she is twenty; meanwhile her husband's enemy, a sharp Sicilian (Eli Wallach), lays expert hands on her. Carroll Baker as the lazy girl who couldn't get through long division and Malden as a grotesque simp (lust makes him helpless) are all-out funny—it's unlikely that either of them ever gave another performance this good or had such wonderful material again, either. Elia Kazan does some of his finest work in this 1956 film; his choices seem miraculously right.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Oct. 15-16.)

BAMBOOZLED
In his latest picture, Spike Lee delivers some shattering news: TV is bad for us. In particular, TV is bad for race relations; mind you, the work of the inflammable Lee has never suggested that race relations are much more than a wild joke, or a contradiction in terms. Marlon Wayans plays Pierre Delacroix—a writer for TV, and something of a parading peacock. He is hired by the brutish Dunwitty (a barrelling Michael Rapaport) to come up with a fresh idea, and duly delivers a minstrel show, complete with chicken gags and black actors encrusted in blackface. The ratings hit the roof, but Pierre and his colleague (Jada Pinkett-Smith), as well as the energetic stars of the act (Savion Glover and Tommy Davidson), come to feel besmirched by their success, as if they were betraying the black cause. (You can't help thinking that one of them might have noticed that to begin with.) Having started with satirical high jinks, the movie ends in lowering gloom and desperate spasms of subplot, and you keep tripping over the big bump in Lee's conceit: the minstrel show itself is stupendously unamusing.—*Anthony Lane* (10/9/00) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, Cinema 2, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

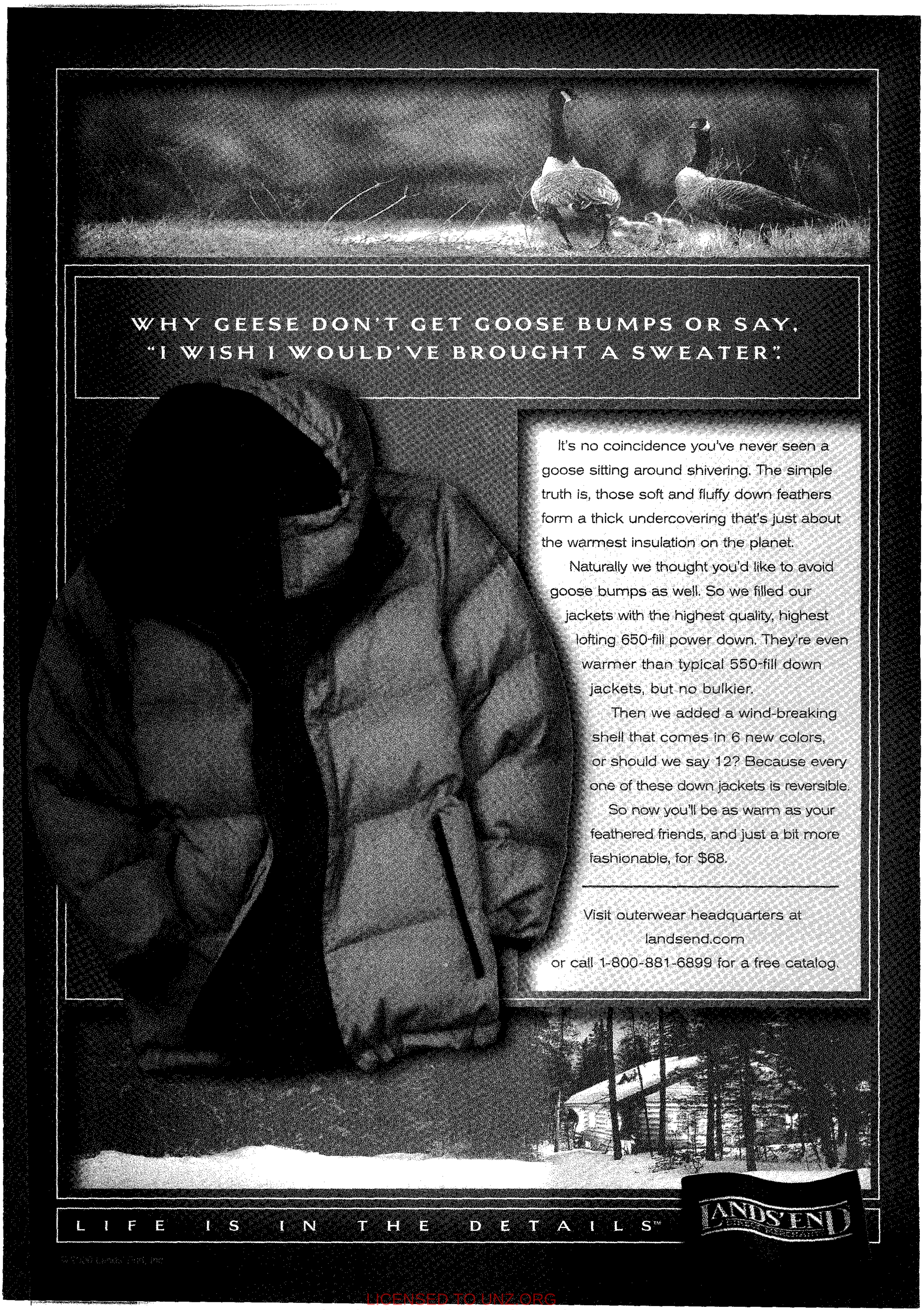
BEST IN SHOW
Christopher Guest reunites much of the cast of "Waiting for Guffman" for another mock documentary; the target this time around is the cloistered world of championship-dog breeding. Guest directs and scripts with a loose, improvisational style (no dialogue was written down), and while some of the scenes glide along with a quick-witted tempo, others are awkward. The dogs themselves are splendid, and when the satire works the laughs are plentiful. Best-in-group awards go to Parker Posey and Michael Hitchcock as an uptight suburban couple whose courtship involved adjacent Starbucks franchises, John Michael Higgins as a preening owner who outshines his shih tzu, and Fred Willard as a chipper commentator who showers asinine comments on the proceedings. If Guest has a trademark style, it's the airtight earnestness he demands of his cast—there's not one wink in the entire film.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

BLADE RUNNER
Ridley Scott's 1982 futuristic thriller is set in a hellish, claustrophobic city, dark and polluted, and with a continual drenching rainfall—it's Los Angeles in the year 2019. The congested-megalopolis sets are extraordinary: this is the grimy, retrograde future—the future as a black market, made up of scrambled, sordid aspects of the present. A visionary sci-fi movie that has its own look can't be ignored: it has its place in film history. But the movie forces passivity on you. It puts you in this lopsided maze of a city, with its post-human feeling, and keeps you persuaded that something bad is about to happen.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Oct. 13-14.)

BRING IT ON
A hyperkinetic teen movie that flirts with some interesting ideas about race, hip-hop, and the overblown world of competitive cheerleading but decides to smile and high-kick instead. The pert-mouthed Kirsten Dunst, captain of a successful suburban California squad, is crushed when she discovers that her team's sultry dance routines were stolen from an all-black squad from East Compton—a form of whitewashing which has a long tradition, from Pat Boone to Vanilla Ice. Without a real showdown, the film merely bounces along with a series of peppy but pointless scenes of young actresses dancing in halter tops.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.)

DANCER IN THE DARK
The new Lars Von Trier film makes his previous efforts seem like models of orthodoxy and restraint. Shot in Sweden, it's set in an America of Von Trier's own devising. Most of the characters speak with foreign accents, and the heroine—a timid, bespectacled factory worker and single mother named Selma—is played by Björk, the Icelandic pop munchkin. Selma has a congenital eye disease, and she is saving up to pay for an operation for her young son, who will otherwise follow her into blindness. When the money is stolen by a neighbor (David Morse), a vengeful Selma quickly conquers her shyness with the help of a gun. The film is unashamedly two-toned, split between a granular authenticity and a stylized gaudiness. The musical scenes—in the factory, on a railroad track—have a deliberate, stamping awkwardness, overlaid with Björk's animal wailing. Many viewers have refused to stomach this unhealthy mixture, yet it feels laced with surprising power, and the harshness of the dénouement is unfeigned.—*A.L.* (9/25/00) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema I, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

THE EXORCIST
The demonic possession of a child, treated with shallow seriousness. The picture is designed to scare people, and it does so by mechanical means: levitations, swivelling heads, vomit being spewed in people's faces. A viewer can become glumly anesthetized by the brackish color and the senseless ugliness of the conception. Neither the producer-writer, William Peter Blatty, nor the director, William



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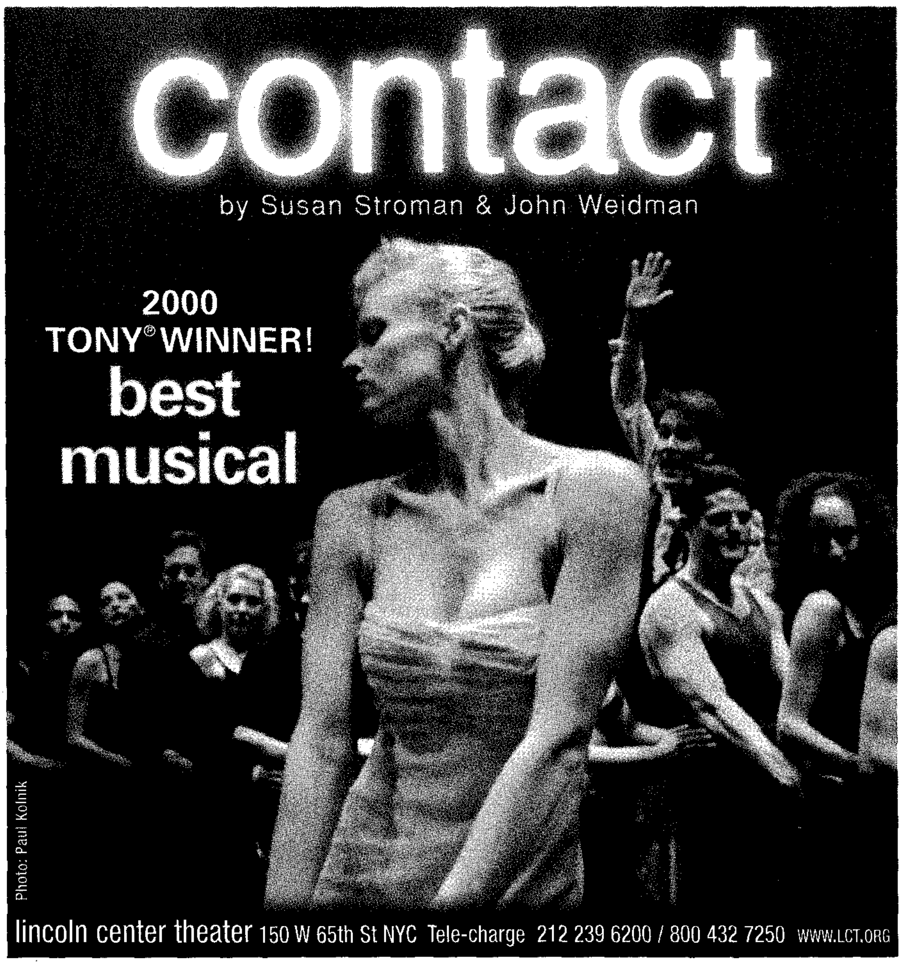
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Friedkin, shows any feeling for the little girl's helplessness and suffering, or for her mother's. It would be sheer insanity to take children. The film was originally released in 1973; the version now playing has additional footage and a remastered soundtrack.—*P.K.* (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

GIRLFIGHT
Diana Guzman (Michelle Rodriguez), a sullen, withdrawn Brooklyn girl who lives with a hapless, preening father (Paul Calderon) and an unformed younger brother (Ray Santiago), walks into a local gym where her brother boxes and at once feels at home. The trainers treat her with rough impersonality, which is exactly what she wants, and she struggles to channel her anger into the skills of a boxer. This small independent movie, written and directed by Karyn Kusama, is an attempt at roughhouse feminist populism. At the end, it turns into a fairy tale as Diana falls for a beautiful young male boxer (Santiago Douglas) who adores her and her right hook, too. In a mortifyingly stupid scene, they are forced to fight each other in the ring. The movie may be naïve and underdone, but it has a new, live subject and, in Rodriguez, a powerhouse star who could go a long way.—*D.D.* (10/2/00) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea West, and Union Square.)

GIRL ON THE BRIDGE
A waifish young woman (Vanessa Paradis) attempts to drown herself but is saved by a knife thrower (Daniel Auteuil) who persuades her to join his act, where she becomes both nerveless victim and indispensable muse. He whirls her from one fancy location to the next, living on the slim proceeds of their success and gazing with avuncular disdain upon her incessant amours. The movie promises to be as steely as the flying blades, and the knife-tossing sequences make you flinch; but the director, Patrice Leconte, seems unable to match the coolness of his heroine, and the story droops into whimsy. In French.—*A.L.* (First & 62nd Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

HUMAN RESOURCES
For all those moviegoers panting for more films about restrictive working practices in the new European economy, this début feature from the young French director Laurent Cantet is a must. Jalil Lespert plays Franck, an ambitious young student who comes home from Paris to spend time at the local steel-pressing plant. His father (Jean-Claude Vallot), who looks like a cowardly walrus, has worked on the factory floor for decades. His bright, inexperienced son goes straight into the personnel department, where the issue is one of restructuring the labor force. We all know what that means. The clash between innocence and experience can be seen coming a mile off, but that doesn't diminish the patient, doomy force of the plot, or Cantet's skill in digging drama out of such intractable material. Apart from Lespert, none of the performers are professionals; they are proper workers, and it shows.—*A.L.* (9/25/00) (Pioneer Theatre and State.)

MEET THE PARENTS
Jay Roach moves on from the campy delights of the Austin Powers series to direct this smoothly acted comedy of errors. Ben Stiller plays a modern man charged with a Victorian task: asking his girlfriend's father for permission to marry his daughter. With a calamitous surname ("pronounced just like it's spelled, F-O-C-K-E-R") and a faintly hilarious profession (male nurse), Stiller seems like a sitting duck for the secretive, overprotective father, played by Robert De Niro. Stiller grovels, De Niro growls, and the girls (Blythe Danner and Teri Polo) watch from the sidelines. This is dumbed-up comedy: there are just enough unexpected moments to redeem all the easy pleasures of the slapstick.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

NOTORIOUS
Alfred Hitchcock's 1964 amatory thriller stars Ingrid Bergman as the daughter of a Nazi, a shady lady who trades secrets and all sorts of things with American agent Cary Grant. The suspense is terrific:

will suspicious, passive Grant succeed in making Bergman seduce him, or will he take over? The honor of the American male is saved by a hairbreadth, but Bergman is literally ravishing in what is probably her sexiest performance. Great trash, great fun.—*P.K.* (The Screening Room; Oct. 13-14.)

NURSE BETTY

A calm, sunny comedy from Neil LaBute, who is taking a break from the nastiness of previous work like "In the Company of Men." That was cinema as vivisection; this has its spasms of violence, but its target—disappointingly soft—is the delusion of ordinary folk. Betty (Renée Zellweger) is a wife and waitress who sees her husband (Aaron Eckhart) murdered in their Kansas home. In blithe mental confusion, she sets off for Los Angeles, pursued by the killers (Morgan Freeman and Chris Rock), to find a fictitious doctor—the super-groomed hero of a television soap. He is merely an actor (Greg Kinnear) who can't decide how to handle the unwavering force of her credulity. Zellweger strolls and simpers through the story, while Freeman falls in love with her from afar. LaBute wants to inspect their uncomprehending obsessions, but the film feels too flimsy to bear much satirical weight.—*A.L.* (9/11/00) (Battery Park 16, Coronet Theatre, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

POINT OF ORDER!

Never has kinescope footage had more impact than in this superb, keenly focussed 1964 documentary. Emile de Antonio and Daniel Talbot edited TV coverage of the Senate's Army-McCarthy hearings (of 1954) into a thrilling piece of political theatre about a demagogue's self-destruction. In addition to the baleful, clangorous McCarthy, the "cast" includes Joseph N. Welch, the wry and humane special counsel for the Army, and McCarthy's chief counsel, Roy Cohn, who registers as a malevolent nervous streak even when he's sitting still.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade Theatre; Oct. 12.)

RATCATCHER

There are no cheap epiphanies in this interior, melancholy portrait of a boy growing up in a Glasgow housing project. The director Lynne Ramsay discovered William Eadie, an untrained actor, and she evokes a complete emotional consciousness from his open, enigmatic face. Her camera hews so closely to his world view that you become fully immersed in his sadness. The inexplicable tragedy that opens the film remains just that, and this lack of closure resonates long after the end credits.—*M.A.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinemas.)

REQUIEM FOR A DREAM

Darren Aronofsky's new film stars Ellen Burstyn as Sara Goldfarb, a Brighton Beach widow who launches herself on a crash diet—a path that will lead to pill addiction and electroshock therapy. Meanwhile, her son Harry (Jared Leto) and his girlfriend, Marion (Jennifer Connelly), yield to the pull of hard drugs. No one in this picture seems to have any powers of resistance; who would have thought denizens of Brighton Beach would give up without a fight? Each of the characters is fenced in by solitude; Aronofsky divides them by split-screen, and punches home their addiction with a blistering montage of pills, puffs, and widening eyes. All of this is managed with formidable skill, but it shuts the movie down, and the various junkies—even Burstyn, who gives the role everything she's got—end up looking less substantial than their respective poisons. A cautionary tale, maybe, but it gets a dangerous buzz from the aesthetics of a fix. The script was adapted from the novel by Hubert Selby, Jr., who appears as a ferrety prison guard.—*A.L.* (10/9/00) (Lincoln Square and Union Square.)

SECRET HONOR

As Richard Milhous Nixon, Philip Baker Hall delivers a wild rumination on his life—a mixture of confession and self-exoneration. Directed by Robert Altman, this 1984 movie has a heightened quality, as if all the tumult of Nixon's last year in the White House, his resignation, and his pardon—all the news that we devoured from maga-

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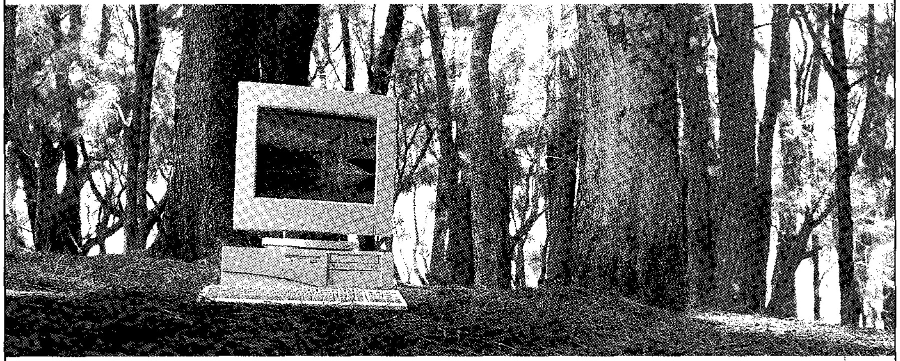

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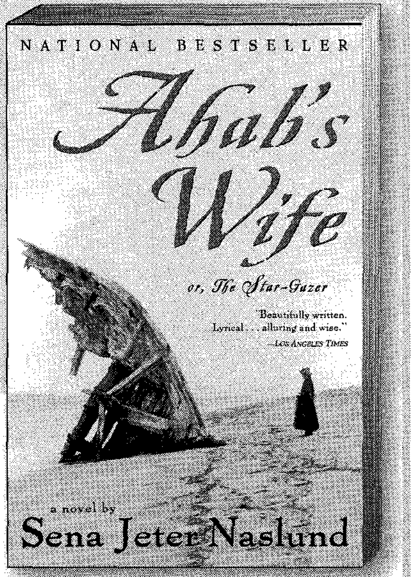

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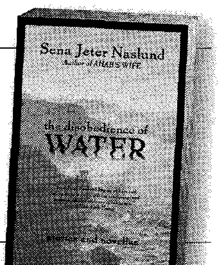

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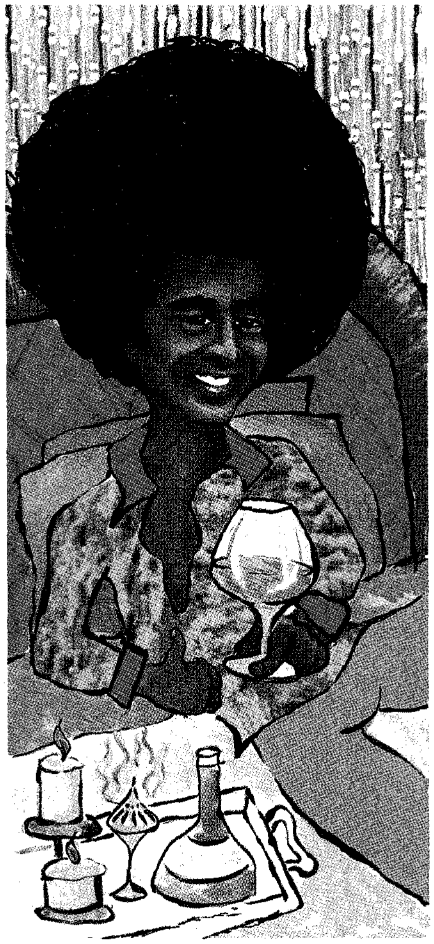
zines and the papers and TV, and the constant streams of revelations—were compacted into this frazzled monologue. It's a seizure, a crackup, and the near-pornographic excess of the display is transfixing. There's a virtuoso naughtiness about the sureness of Altman's touch here; he has a small, weird triumph with this gonzo psychodocudrama.—*P.K.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Oct. 12.)

SOLAS
Pregnant and alone, a beautiful young woman named Maria (Ana Fernandez) has hidden herself in the ragged outskirts of a nameless Spanish city. Into this scene of urban isolation arrives Maria's mother, played by Maria Galina, and from the start she fills the screen with a radiant beneficence. Her village-bound, old-fashioned ways build a sense of community where there was none, and her unwavering devotion softens her daughter's jaundiced outlook. With each minute, the film lifts in spirit, and though it plays a familiar, sentimental melody it's still capable of generating some genuine pathos. When the director, Benito Zambrano, dedicates the film to his mother in the end credits, the effect of having watched a Hallmark card is complete. In Spanish.—*M.A.* (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE WAY OF THE GUN
Stylized, violent, nasty fun—not a movie for Senator Lieberman. Two good-looking young thugs, played by Ryan Phillippe and Benicio del Toro, abduct a young woman (Juliette Lewis) who is carrying, for a good fee, the child of a respectable-looking gangster. The boys head for Mexico with the pregnant woman in tow and various henchmen of the gangster in pursuit. The writer-director, Christopher McQuarrie, penned the acidulous screenplay for "The Usual Suspects," and here he furnishes a peculiar philosophical jargon for the men which is actually quite funny; the Fancy Dan rhetoric plays off against the hard, flat walls and opaque, shadowless surfaces of the Southwest. McQuarrie is an eccentric—a thinking man's brutalist.—*D.D.* (10/2/00) (Battery Park 16 and Empire 25.)



Opening Oct. 13, Tim Meadows in "The Ladies Man."

ROBERT MELEE

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BOOTMEN
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Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, and Quad Cinema.
GET CARTER
Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.
INTO THE ARMS OF STRANGERS
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REMEMBER THE TITANS
East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village East Cinemas.
TABOO
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.
TIGERLAND
62nd & Broadway and Union Square.
TWO FAMILY HOUSE
Union Square.
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Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.
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Film Forum.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.

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Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
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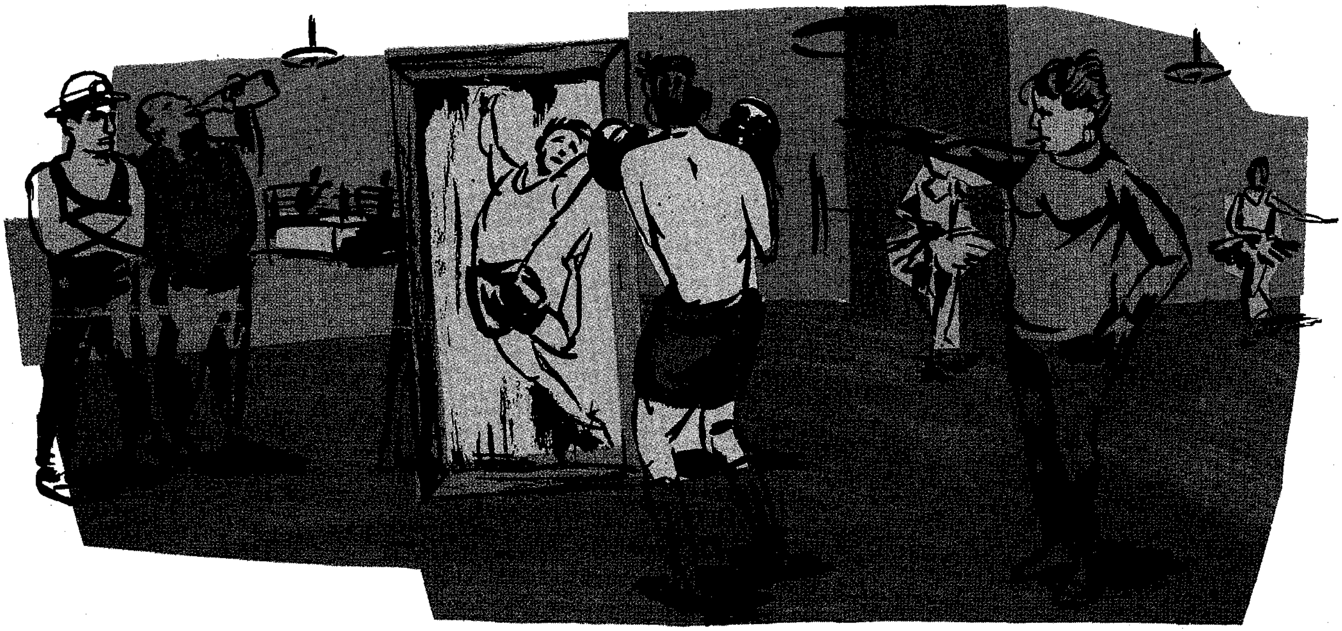
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



Stephen Daldry's "Billy Elliot," a drama about a young boy who must choose between boxing and ballet, opens Oct. 13.

WHITING TENNIS

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Oct. 29: "Lon Chaney: Man of a Thousand Faces." Oct. 14 at 2: "The Penalty" (1920, Wallace Worsley). ♦ Oct. 14 at 4: "Ace of Hearts" (1921, Worsley). ♦ Oct. 15 at 2: "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" (1923, Worsley). ♦ Oct. 15 at 4: "The Unholy Three" (1925, Tod Browning). ♦ Oct. 21 at 2: "Victory" (1919, Maurice Tourneur). ♦ Oct. 21 at 4: "The Monster" (1925, Roland West). ♦ Oct. 22 at 2: "The Unknown" (1927, Browning). ♦ Oct. 22 at 4: "The Phantom of the Opera" (1925, Rupert Julian). ♦ Classic movies. Oct. 14-15 at 6:30: "Orpheus" (1949, Jean Cocteau; in French). ♦ Oct. 21 at 7:30: "The Italian" (1915, Reginald Barker). ♦ Oct. 22 at 6:30: "Voyage to Italy" (1953, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Oct. 12-17: The Second Annual Bulgarian Film Festival, featuring work from the post-Communist era. ♦ Oct. 19-22: "Here's Looking at You Kid! The Girls' Film Festival," a selection of shorts, animation, features, and documentaries.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Oct. 12: "Eve" (1962, Joseph Losey). ♦ Oct. 13: "Eeny Meeny" (2000, Alice Nellis; in Czech). ♦ Oct. 14: "The Return of the Idiot" (1999, Sasa Gedeon; in Czech) and "Cozy Dens" (1999, Jan Hrebejk; in Czech). ♦ Oct. 15: "Sekal Must Die" (1998, Vladimír Michálek; in Czech) and "All My Loved Ones" (1999, Matej Minác; in Czech). ♦ Oct. 16: "The Prisoner of Zenda" (1937, John Cromwell). ♦ Oct. 17: "Céline and Julie Go Boating" (1974, Jacques Rivette; in French). ♦ Oct. 18: "In the Realm of the Senses" (1976, Nagisa Oshima; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 19: "Clean Shaven" (1995, Lodge Kerrigan). ♦ Oct. 20-22: "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie" (1972, Luis Buñuel; in French). ♦ Oct. 23: "Gunga Din" (1939, George Stevens). ♦ Oct. 24: "Up, Down, Fragile" (1995, Rivette; in French).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Oct. 13-26 at 1:30, 3:40, 5:50, 7:50, and 9:50: "Diary of a Chambermaid" (1964, Luis Buñuel; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Oct. 15: "The Imaginary War," a selection of films about fictive battles. Oct. 13 at 6 and Oct. 14 at 5: "Mad Max II: The Road Warrior" (1981, George Miller). ♦ Oct. 13 at 8 and Oct. 14 at 2:30: "Blade Runner" (†). ♦ Oct. 15 at 1: "Neighbours" (1952, Norman McLaren) and "Dr. Strangelove: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb" (1964, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ Oct. 15 at 3: "The Mouse That Roared" (1959, Jack Arnold). ♦ Oct. 15 at 5: "Wag the Dog" (1997, Barry Levinson). ♦ Through Dec. 12: "The Lost Childhood," films about youth and adolescence. Oct. 12 at 6 and Oct. 15 at 5:15: "Lacombe, Lucien" (1974, Louis Malle; in French). ♦ Oct. 13 at 8: "Muddy River" (1981, Kohei Oguri; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 15 at 12:30 and Oct. 16 at 6: "Baby Doll" (†). ♦ Oct. 15 at 5 and Oct. 16 at 2: "Lolita" (1962, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ Oct. 17 at 6: "Europa, Europa" (1992, Agnieszka Holland; in German and Russian). ♦ Oct. 20 at 8 and Oct. 22 at 1: A program of films by Joseph Cornell (1940-68). ♦ Oct. 21 at 1: "Imitation of Christ" (1970, Andy Warhol). ♦ Oct. 21 at 5: "Jail Bait" (1972, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German). ♦ Oct. 21 at 5: "Dog Star Man" (1961-64, Stan Brakhage).

THE SCREENING ROOM

54 Varick St. (334-2100)—Oct. 13-19: A Cary Grant retrospective. Oct. 13-14: "North by Northwest" (1959, Alfred Hitchcock) and "Notorious" (†). ♦ Oct. 15-16: "His Girl Friday" (1940, Howard Hawks) and "Bringing Up Baby" (1938, Hawks). ♦ Oct. 17: "I Was a Male War Bride" (1949, Hawks) and "Only Angels Have Wings" (1939, Hawks). ♦ Oct. 18: "Arsenic and Old Lace" (1944, Frank Capra) and "Monkey Business" (1952, Hawks). ♦ Oct. 19: "Holiday" (1938, George Cukor) and "The Philadelphia Story" (1940, Cukor). ♦ Classic Hong Kong action films. Oct. 13-14 and Oct. 20-21 at midnight: "The Valiant Ones" (1975, King Hu; in Cantonese). ♦ Oct. 14-15 and Oct. 21-22 at noon: "Wonderwall" (1969, Joe Massot).

SYMPHONY SPACE

2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Through Nov. 28: "Empires of Passion: The Cinema of Obsession." Oct. 17 at 7: "Wuthering Heights" (1953, Luis Buñuel; in Spanish). ♦ Oct. 17 at 9: "The Green Room" (1978, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ Oct. 24 at 7: "Law of Desire" (1987, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish). ♦ Oct. 24 at 9: "The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant" (1927, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German).

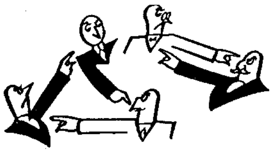
WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Oct. 10-15: "Political Pix: The New Yorker Goes to the Movies," a series curated by David Denby and Kent Jones. Oct. 10 at 1 and Oct. 11 at 10: "Primary" (1960, Robert Drew, Al Maysles, and D. A. Pennebaker). ♦ Oct. 10 at 2:20 and Oct. 13 at 9:35: "A Perfect Candidate" (1996, R. J. Cutler and David Van Taylor). ♦ Oct. 11 at 2 and 6: "A Lion Is in the Streets" (1953, Raoul Walsh). ♦ Oct. 11 at 3:50 and 7:50: "All the King's Men" (1949, Robert Rossen). ♦ Oct. 13 at 1 and 5:20: "Salt of the Earth" (1954, Herbert Biberman). ♦ Oct. 13 at 3 and 7:15: "My Son John" (1952, Leo McCarey). ♦ Oct. 12 at 1 and Oct. 14 at 8:30: "The Confession" (1970, Constantin Costa-Gavras; in French and Italian). ♦ Oct. 12 at 3:45 and 7:35: "Secret Honor" (†). ♦ Oct. 12 at 5:40 and 9:30: "Point of Order!" (†). ♦ Oct. 14 at 4:30: "Moloch" (1999, Aleksandr Sokurov; in German). ♦ Oct. 14 at 6:40: "Seventeen Years" (1999, Zhang Yuan; in Mandarin). ♦ Oct. 15 at 4:30: "The Battle of Chile" (1975-76, Patricio Guzmán; in Spanish).

THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

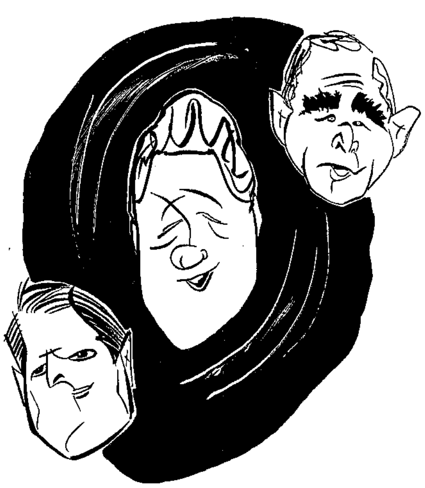
COMMENT
BOTH SIDES NOW



Right from the start of the political season, it's been Clinton vs. Clinton. No, not Bill vs. Hillary—and, no, not Horndog Bill vs. Statesman Bill. What seeing Al Gore and George W. Bush duke it out has most persistently called to mind is a contest between the two biggest personal political strengths of the current President of the United States. Like Clinton, one candidate has high intelligence—a penetrating mind, a command of the sweep and detail of public policy, and a wide-ranging intellectual curiosity. The other, also like Clinton, has emotional acuity—a talent for projecting ease and empathy, an ability to size up a person or a group of people, sense the vectors of hope and sentiment or anxiety and resentment rocketing around the room, and windsurf the breezes and gales of feeling toward his goal. It's been the analyst vs. the salesman, the Apollo from Tennessee (via Washington, St. Albans, and Harvard) vs. the Dionysus from Texas (via Kennebunkport, Andover, and Yale), thought vs. instinct—in short, Smart Bill vs. Warm Bill.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

With those two sides to his coin, Clinton has managed to overcome formidable obstacles (many of his own making) to mint surprising quantities of political gold. Gore and Bush went into their first televised debate last week each hoping to grab a piece of the other's half of the Clinton formula, and most of the post-debate analysis was devoted to assessing whether they had succeeded in addressing the weaknesses that, in their cases, are the conspicuous obverses of their strengths. The Vice-President was animated (for him), the Governor well spoken (for him). But ninety minutes is a long time, and not much of it had expired before both men began to slip into the political-cartoon versions of themselves. Gore's audible sighs had the unattractive sound of condescension, and some of his anecdotes turned out to be inaccurate. Bush demonstrated that he knew enough about his own proposals to sketch them in outline, but he was helpless to defend them in argument. When Gore said repeatedly that his opponent's plans are skewed to favor the well-to-do, Bush could only reply, just as repeatedly, that Gore was guilty of "fuzzy math." (He was alluding, whether he knew it or not, to the arcane concept of "fuzzy logic," though he made it sound more like the stuffed dice over the dashboard.) Just what was wrong with Gore's arithmetic Bush did not or could not say.



The campaign of which that debate was, so far, the sodden climax is taking place under new and hopeful conditions, largely of Clinton's creation. As Joe Klein shows ("Eight Years," page 188), the President, through unheralded perseverance and political skill, has succeeded in freeing the country from the fiscal (and ideological) binds that constricted political possibility for a generation. The result is political space in which proposals for public action can be considered on their merits and not simply dismissed as incompatible with public solvency. Bush deserves credit for using that new space to nudge his party away from the exotica of its extreme wing and toward an acknowledgment of social responsibility. With that, he may have changed his party for good, just as Clinton did his; Bush may be the first New Republican. He has a lively interest in certain issues, most prominently education. But there is little evidence that he acquired those interests until it became expedient to have them. Even his letters to his father, when the senior Bush was President, the *Times* reported recently, are mostly notes about job-

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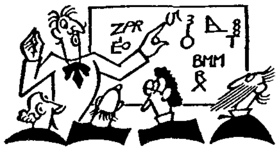
filling and requests for autographs. Gore may be a bit of a drone and he has been known to pander, but he is also a rare phenomenon—a politician who formulated a series of substantive ideas about a difficult subject and then put them down in a book without the aid of a ghostwriter. Within the Administration, he has been a voice for focus, discipline, and firmness.

Bush and Gore are contemporaries who came to maturity against a particular background of public events: the civil-rights struggle, the Vietnam War, Watergate, the emergence of environmentalism, "malaise," the Cold War and the nuclear arms race, Reaganism, and more. Gore thought hard and earnestly about all these things. Bush ran for Congress in 1978, but it was a race essentially without issues; he is not known to have come to grips with any public question until 1993. He was then forty-five years old and, having been frustrated in his attempts to become Commissioner of Baseball, took a flyer on a run for governor. Gore, by contrast, has always been alive to the difficulty of making his life and work correspond to his moral perceptions. The way the two men responded to Vietnam is the best, but by no means the only, example. Both voluntarily entered armed service, and both did so in large measure because it would have been embarrassing to their fathers if they hadn't. But Gore thought about his duty in broader terms, too. He was against the war and, after considering every option, including draft resistance and exile, concluded that the most useful contribution he could make to his beliefs would be to go into the Army, and to Vietnam, as an enlisted man. Bush's views on the war are unknown; he disposed of the problem by taking refuge as an officer in a unit of the Texas Air National Guard.

Vietnam, of course, brought out another pair of Clinton halves. The young Clinton saw the war as an agonizing challenge to conscience; he was more active in the antiwar movement than all but a few thousand of his contemporaries, much more so than Gore. Yet, like the young Bush, he looked for an easy way out. A spot in the stateside Guard would have suited him fine; in the event, he dodged and weaved until a low draft number came along to moot his problem. This was a case of Smart, Warm Bill vs. Slick Willie. Come January, few will be sorry to see the back of Slick Willie. Smart Bill and Warm Bill are another story. At least one of them will be sorely missed. We'll find out which in November.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

ANTHEMS
THE SUPERCOOL TOP-SECRET DVD-DECODER SONG



Since 1998, the Internet site MP3.com has served as an on-line bazaar, where any garage band in the universe can offer up its music and wait for the accolades to pour in. More than half a million songs are posted on the site, but Joseph Wecker's "Descramble" is not one of them. On September 11th, only four days after Wecker posted his song, and just after it topped the site's folk-music chart, he received a terse E-mail from MP3 saying that his song was being pulled, because it had "either a song title or lyrics that are offensive or otherwise inappropriate." This may seem surprising for a work whose lyrics don't get much racier, or more intelligible, than "Retrieve byte 1 of KEY / XOR it with byte 85 of SEC / And store the result in t2."

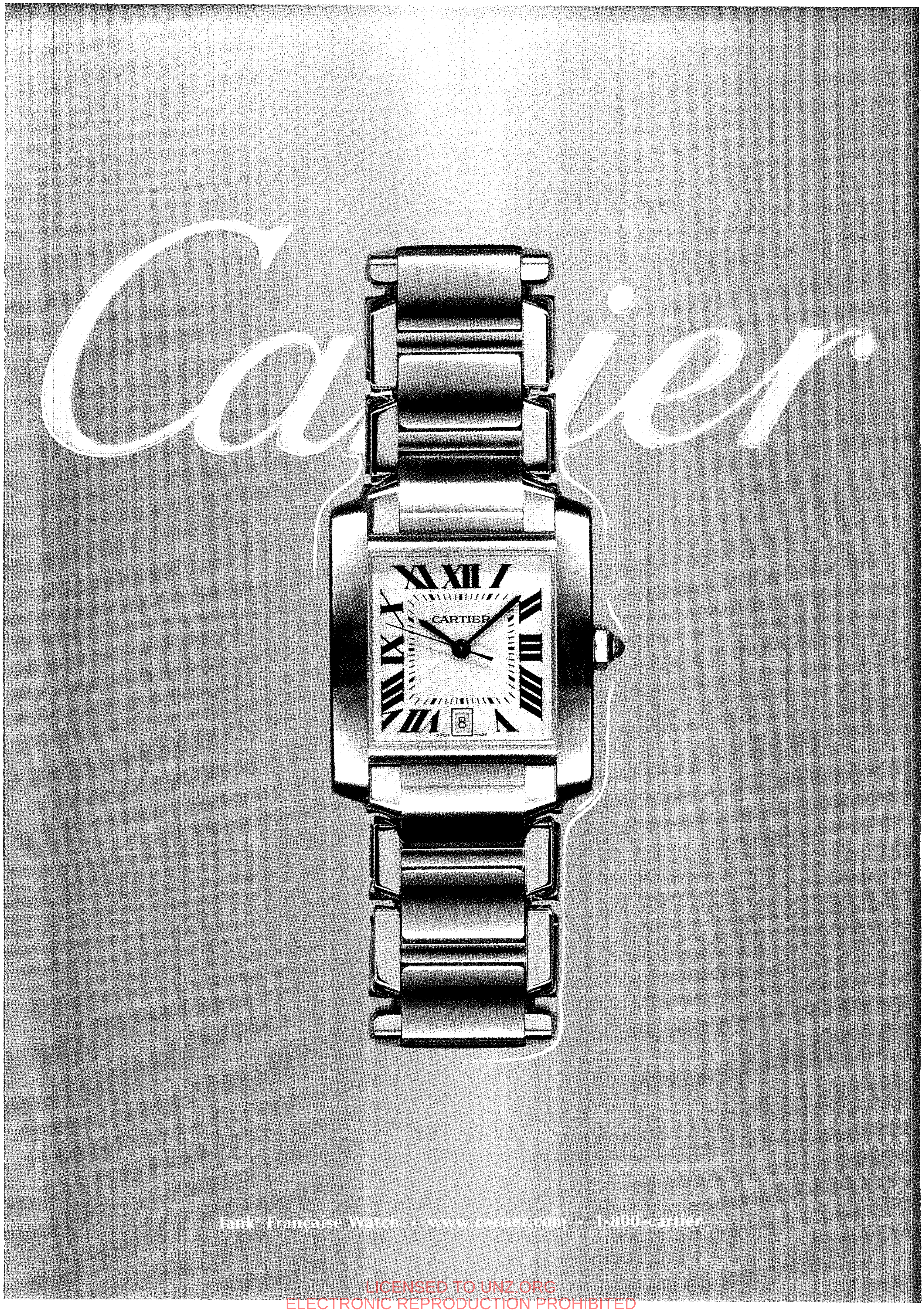
In fact, the lyrics of "Descramble" are passages from a controversial software code, known as DeCSS, that enables hackers to decrypt movie DVDs, copy them onto their computers, and, if they wish, share their pirated films with anyone on the Internet. The code, which was created a year ago by a fifteen-year-old computer whiz in Norway, drew immediate reprisals from the movie industry. The Motion Picture Association of America, fearing that DeCSS would be its Napster, sued Web sites that posted the code; a firm that merely printed it on T-shirts was hit with a related lawsuit. In August, a federal judge in New York took Hollywood's side, ruling that it was against the law to disseminate DeCSS on the Web.

In the midst of the court case, Wecker, a twenty-two-year-old college student and computer programmer in Salt Lake City, came up with the idea to compose, record, and upload "Descramble," a seven-and-a-half-minute recitation of the code accompanied by a gloomily strummed acoustic guitar. (Imagine Lou Reed singing a calculus textbook.) In this way, as Wecker saw it, the code would be protected by the First Amendment. "I thought it would be funny if I wrote a song with source code as lyrics, to make the point that source code is speech," Wecker said the other day. "It's like explaining to your neighbors how to take apart a toaster. It shouldn't be illegal."

Wecker's favorite band is Radiohead; the name of his own band (which recently recorded a grungier version of "Descramble") is Don't Eat Pete. "I'm just your standard starving college student," he explained by telephone. "But I'm not starving, because I own three Internet businesses, and they're doing wonderfully."

Within days of posting the song on his Web site, Wecker got about ten downloads. "I thought *that* was awesome," he says. The judge's ruling against DeCSS, however, transformed "Descramble" from hacker joke to geek protest anthem. Wecker got thousands of downloads, so he decided to post the song on MP3, where the big time beckoned. "Everyone kept calling it the Bob Dylan song of the wired age," Wecker says. "But I wrote it in a half hour during a lunch break." "Descramble" is not particularly easy to sing along to, nor is it really very stirring. It isn't even especially good. But it is lucky. The best thing that can happen to a protest song is for it to be banned somewhere, and now Wecker has a hit. The song has been downloaded about sixty thousand times on his site alone and has been played on alternative and college radio stations. Wecker performed it on a television show in Canada. And nobody from the movie industry has tried to stop him. "We will not be suing this songwriter," Mark Litvack, the vice-president of the M.P.A.A.'s anti-piracy division, said.

Still, MP3, which likes to think of itself as a supporter of free speech, has made the preëmptive decision to ban the song. "It is a smart business move to stay within the letter of the law," a spokesman for MP3 said, citing the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judge's August ruling. Wecker received a fuller explanation in an E-mail from another MP3 employee. "We're sorta being sued by enough people right now," the employee wrote. "I guess we'd like to keep out of court for a while, if that's O.K."

Wecker isn't sure where he'll go with "Descramble," but, because the song uses only a quarter of the forbidden code, he's got plenty of material left to work with. He said, "I have toyed with the idea of releasing an album."

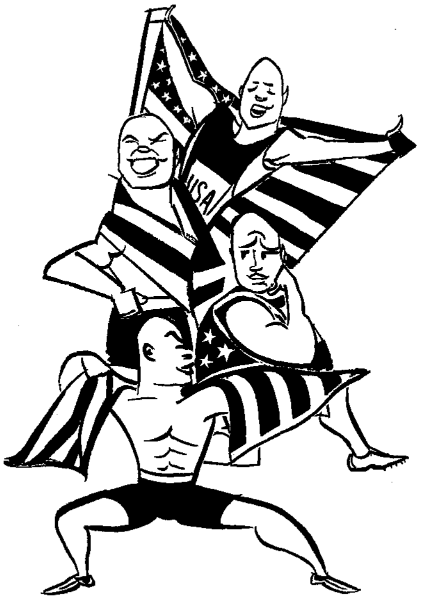
—*Peter Maass*

ONE WORLD DEPT.
HOW AMERICA MISSED THE PARTY

SCORE
U.S.
RUSSIA
FRANCE
GERMANY
ITALY
VEN

The Olympic Games are over. The Greco-Roman wrestlers have gone, leaving a dent in the floor; the nymphs have departed, skipping out of the gym to begin the process of removing the glitter from their hair, preferably by dunking themselves in sheep-dip. It will come as a surprise to many Americans that the Sydney Games were agreed to have been the best of all time. This is not because Juan Antonio Samaranch said so in his closing riff; the president of the International Olympic Committee says that of almost every Olympiad. That he neglected to mention it in 1996 was taken as conclusive proof that the Atlanta Games had shown all the allure of a shot-putter's shorts. No, Sydney was a breeze because people had a great time; records fell, the bus strike failed to happen, the sharks in the harbor disdained to snack on the toes of triathletes, and the bins of more than a hundred thousand free condoms, courteously positioned in the Olympic Village, had to be refilled. Even if you failed, you scored.

Only one chunk of the planet missed out on the party. Indeed, many Americans were never informed that there was a party going on at all. It is fashionable, and correct, to blame NBC, which managed to forget that sports, like fish, have to be served fresh; but the fault line runs deeper than that. If NBC missed the ratings it sought, that is not just because of bad packaging but because the Olympics were not what Americans wanted. It takes a peculiar cast of mind to enjoy the Games; ideally, you should hail from a country that is impoverished or underpowered, or from a place that, like Australia, has something important to prove. The United States has nothing to prove, and the rest of the competitors, united against us, are left with everything to gain. If we are not careful, it can end nastily; witness the sight of James Carter, streaking ahead in his four-hundred-metre-hurdles semifinal and turning around to scoff at the other entrants. The crowds jeered him, as they did the sprinters on the American men's relay team who crowned their triumph by posing as muscular Greek statues. This could have been read as a witty advertisement for the Athens Games of 2004, but it didn't work out. America was winning the races and losing the plot.



Ugly Americans

Still, there was an upside. We were treated to the familiar sight of Marion Jones pounding to gold in the one hundred and two hundred metres, outstripping the field not by a head or a neck, as custom demands, but by the length of a stretch limo; later, we were offered the unfamiliar sight of Marion Jones losing. She took it startlingly well, as if to remind us that gods need not be monsters. Even after her fellow-sprinters had decided to act like cheerleaders and twirl the relay baton in the air instead of passing it from palm to palm, Jones accepted the bronze with unflustered grace and cheer. She was one of the deities of Sydney, outshone only by Ian Thorpe. We had heard about his flipper-size feet, but it was a revelation to see his profile, which is carved like the prow of a Viking longship; unless he sprouts a little outboard motor in the small of his back, it is hard to picture a more perfect swimming machine. Best of all, though, was the heroic shyness of his winner's grin; Thorpe is seventeen years old and rules the waves, but he clearly wouldn't die if he didn't.

The Olympic ideal is a joke, and an out-of-date joke at that; but, stubbornly, it remains a *good* joke. The Games are the sole surviving occasion on which the mantras of liberal daydreaming—global peace, total harmony, safe sex—make any sense at all, and, if Sydney had not revived them, they might have blown away for good. That Australia silvered the whole affair with a swagger that fringed on camp was precisely as it should be, for the Olympics are nothing if not a *comédie humaine.* If you didn't, for a couple of minutes, find yourself whimpering illogically at the weight lifter Maria Isabel Urrutia, the first gold medallist that Colombia has produced in any event, then you shouldn't have bothered to watch. That South Korea notched up a one-two-three in women's archery is bizarre enough, but the casual remark of one commentator ("There are, of course, three million registered archers in Korea") was a bull's-eye; that is exactly the sort of fascinating nonsense that the Olympics alone can provide. (Imagine the Seoul suburbs on weekends; it must be like a Kurosawa movie down there.) What is asked of us at such moments is not disloyalty but simply the will to look outward—to laugh, with a pleasure that is only lightly inked with irony, at the ridiculous dedication of people who have travelled from countries you will never visit to try their hand at sports you barely recognize. America has no need to believe in the policy of One World, because America is a world unto itself; but Sydney reminded us that isolation, like other vices, can make you go blind.

—*Anthony Lane*

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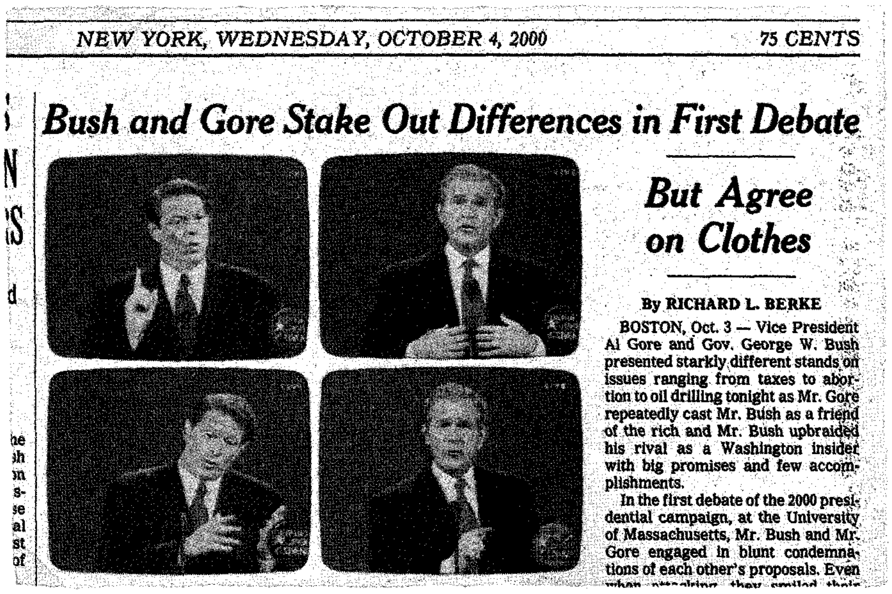

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2000 75 CENTS

Bush and Gore Stake Out Differences in First Debate

But Agree on Clothes

By RICHARD L. BERKE

BOSTON, Oct. 3 — Vice President Al Gore and Gov. George W. Bush presented starkly different stands on issues ranging from taxes to abortion to oil drilling tonight as Mr. Gore repeatedly cast Mr. Bush as a friend of the rich and Mr. Bush upbraided his rival as a Washington insider with big promises and few accomplishments.

In the first debate of the 2000 presidential campaign, at the University of Massachusetts, Mr. Bush and Mr. Gore engaged in blunt condemnations of each other's proposals. Even

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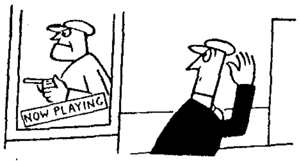
THE PICTURES
THE REAL SCANDAL BEHIND "THE YARDS"



When the filmmaker James Gray was a child, in Flushing in the early nineteen-eighties, he hated not being able to watch Yankees games on television. He asked his father, Irwin, "How come Queens doesn't have cable?"

"Because of fucking Donald Manes," his father replied. Manes was the Queens borough president, but James didn't see the connection. "Donald Manes holds up cable contracts for bribes, and the cable companies say 'Fuck you,'" his father explained. "That's how the city works."

"I thought my dad was nuts," Gray said on the telephone from Los Angeles last week. "Then Manes killed himself"—in 1986, facing an extensive corruption investigation, he stabbed himself in the heart with a kitchen knife—"and a week later the cable wires were going in."

Gray's new film, "The Yards," which opens later this month, is set in present-day New York, but it is steeped in the graft and greed that marked the city fifteen years ago. Steve Lawrence plays a character based on Manes; James Caan is the tough, rueful head of an electronics-parts company that uses bribery and sabotage to win subway contracts; Mark Wahlberg plays Caan's nephew, a baffled ex-con who is forced to betray his family; and Ellen Burstyn is Wahlberg's dying mother.

Writers often turn to the family scrapbook for inspiration, as Gray did for his first film, "Little Odessa," about Russian-Jewish immigrant life. For "The Yards," he has drawn on a painful family episode that he has never discussed in public, or even, really, with his family.

Nearly three years ago, Gray gave the script to his father, a former partner in an electronics-parts company called Envort-Gray, which was a supplier for the M.T.A. Irwin Gray turned out to be an excellent technical consultant. "He said, 'Don't have them using baseball bats to sabotage competitors' subway cars in the yards—that wouldn't look like equipment failure. Instead, have them 'overvolt' the cars' electronics with a cattle prod,'" Gray recalled. "I'd had cash payoffs in the script, but my dad said there would also be fur coats, baseball tickets, terrific bottles of red wine. All those details went right into the movie.

"In the film, James Caan's office is almost exactly like my dad's," Gray said. "And the film's atmosphere of impending downfall is ours, too. I went off to college in 1987, and two months later my mother was diagnosed with a brain tumor, and a few months after that the federal government began pursuing my father. For the next five years, it felt like someone was stepping on my chest.

"My father sort of told us, 'The company is going south,'" Gray continued, "but I had no idea what that really meant until I read it in the New York *Times*." In 1991, the government brought a fifty-six-count indictment, charging Irwin Gray and another Envort-Gray partner with paying five hundred thousand dollars in bribes to a Metro-North official—who committed suicide during the investigation—and with billing for undelivered parts. "The judge saw that my dad wasn't heavily involved in the crimes, so in 1992 my father copped to three counts, paid a fifty-thousand-dollar fine, and got a suspended sentence," Gray said. "But I don't think we've recovered yet. I'll look at him sitting in the living room, staring, and I'll say, 'Hey, Pop, what's the matter?' And he'll focus slowly and say, 'I could never get it to work.' Career, life—I'm not sure.

"My father is a strange man. I love him very much, but he's also completely clinical. I have no idea how he feels about all this."

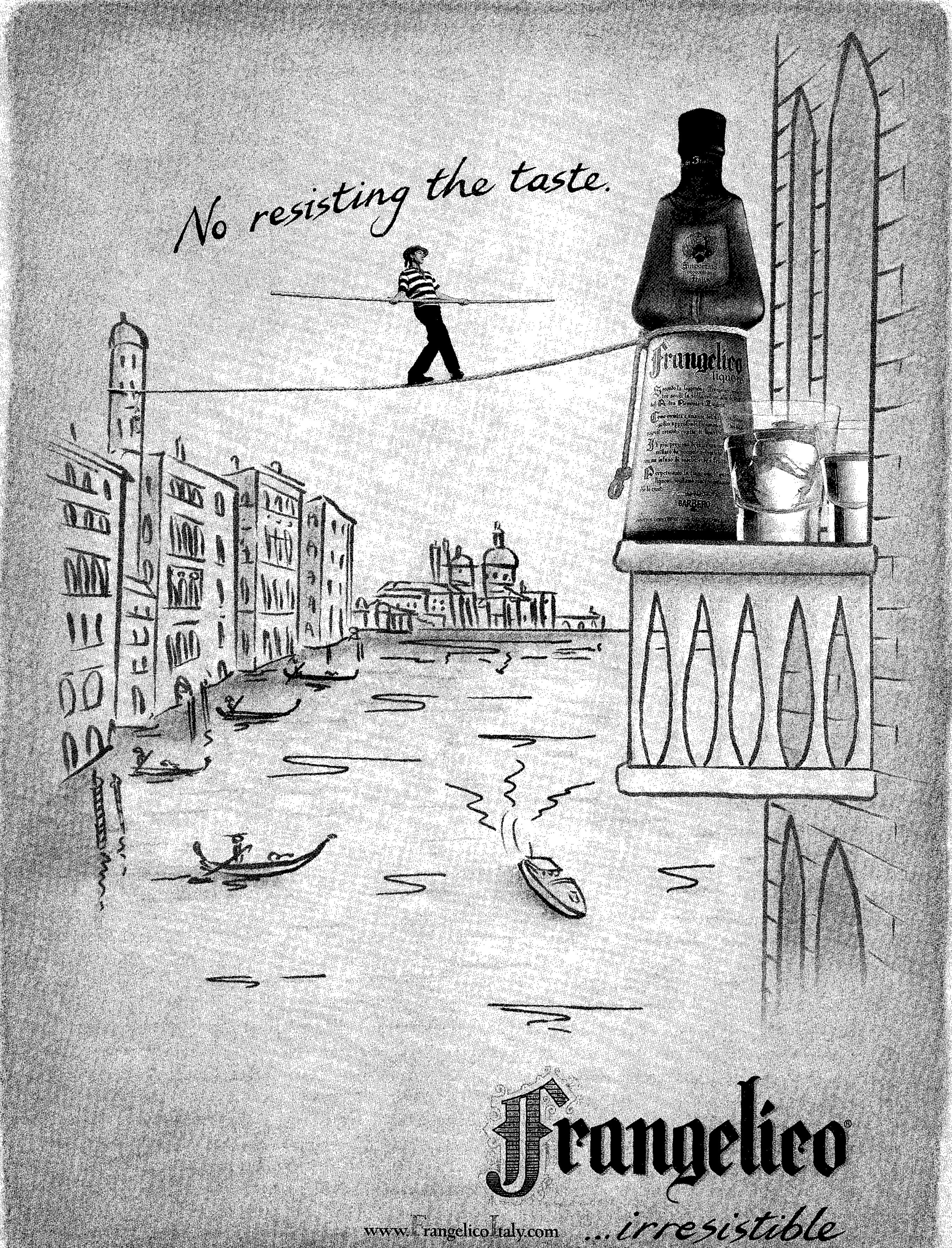
Irwin Gray, speaking at his house in Queens, said that he'd had a strong reaction to his son's script. "I had to put it aside a few times, because I got a monstrous headache, my chest tightened up, and my blood pressure went up a hundred points. It brought back the period when agents with guns were at the door, and the world was closing in. I was popping stress pills, stomach pills, and I had to be an icicle, in a sense, to deal with everything.

"James never seemed to be paying attention," he said. "But obviously he saw the kitchen-table conversations with my partners, he heard that our competitors were shoving rags down our cooling tubes at the yards, he knew that it was war. The James Caan character is a composite, but I see myself in him. I should have known—I knew—that corruption was going on, but I was a zombie at work because of James's mother. The end of her life was such a horror. It must have torn James apart to see all this."

The director has invited his father to screenings of "The Yards" in New York, to no avail. "I told James I've been very busy," Irwin Gray said. "The truth is I'm scared to see the film." He paused. "But I'll go. I'll see it, of course. He's my son."

—*Tad Friend*

ROBERT MANKOFF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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
BIG PHARMA'S DRUG PROBLEM

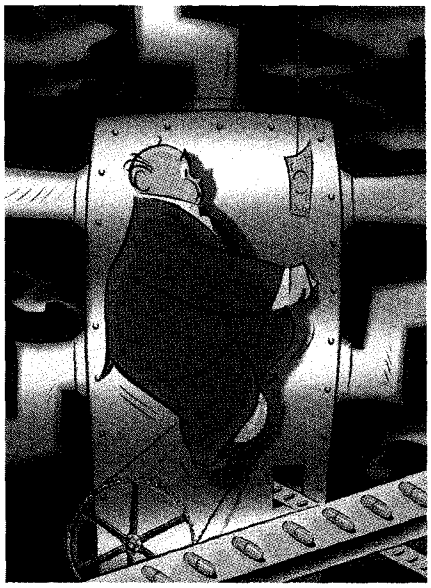
Drug manufacturers make lovely villains, whether in the novels of Robin Cook or in a Presidential campaign. During this election year, they've become an even greater target of populist ire than Big Tobacco. Hardly a day goes by without newspaper headlines beating up on the "medicine merchants" for "pushing pills with piles of money."

By now, drugmakers have grown accustomed to being called greedy price-gougers. Back in 1776, in "The Wealth of Nations," Adam Smith wrote, "Apothecaries' profit is become a by-word denoting something uncommonly extravagant." Even as pharmaceutical companies have utterly transformed health care—ninety-five per cent of the drugs in use today did not exist fifty years ago—they've been besieged by demands for lower prices and tighter regulation. We may want our new wonder drugs. We'd just prefer not to have to pay for them.

But the price-gouging charge is a red herring. The blame for high drug prices should fall on our incredibly abstruse regulatory system, not on money-hungry pill-pushers. To be sure, the modern drug industry has become skilled at working that system, protecting its patents and keeping competitors at bay. In the fifties, drug companies pushed doctors to prescribe brand-name drugs and got state legislatures to pass laws preventing pharmacists from substituting generic drugs for brand-name prescriptions. When those laws were overturned, in the seventies, drug companies shifted their attention to the regulatory process, securing easier patent extensions and exploiting loopholes to delay the introduction of generic substitutes. They learned to patent everything from dosages to the shape of pills.

Is this the face of evil? Opportunism is more like it. The real culprits, if there are any, are the lawmakers, whose attempts to make medicine affordable have managed only to make it more expensive. For the most part, lawmakers have understood that price controls discourage the development of new drugs. But they have also felt the need to tinker endlessly with the way drugs are made, bought, and sold, creating a dense regulatory thicket that has stifled competition. For example, current law effectively keeps patent disputes from being decided for two and a half years. This gives brand-name drugmakers seeking to stave off their generic imitators a thirty-month reprieve, which, for a company selling a blockbuster drug, is worth billions. Basically, drugmakers have an incentive to work as hard in the courtroom as they do in the lab.

If you really want to lower drug prices, then, here's the prescription: shorten the length of patents, eliminate patent extensions, open the market to competitors quickly, get rid of all the regulatory provisions that lead to endless litigation, and close the loopholes that grant generic drugs brief monopolies of their own. Prices will fall.



The point of the patent system, after all, is to encourage innovation. We allow companies to enjoy temporary monopolies on their discoveries because that's what motivates them to make those discoveries. But, when the monopoly lasts too long, companies don't look as hard for the next big thing. It's less costly to extend the life of a patent than to hatch a new drug. Yes, patents spur innovation, but so does their expiration. In the nineteen-seventies, when obsolete regulations on generic drugs were tossed out, generics suddenly became viable competitors in the marketplace. Not surprisingly, the big drug companies responded by investing heavily in the development of new drugs, ushering in the present pharmaceutical golden age.

What the industry needs is a heavier dose of competition, not some misbegotten price-control cocktail. We often hear about how much cheaper brand-name drugs are in Canada than in the United States, and new bills have been proposed that would allow drug distributors to import pills from abroad, where prices are controlled. But those pills would not exist in the first place if we had price controls here. Without the prospect of outsized profits, the new-drug pipeline would soon run dry.

The drug business is immensely risky. It costs half a billion dollars to bring a new drug to market. Just one in every five thousand drugs that are tested is eventually approved by the F.D.A. And, of those drugs that are approved, only three of every ten turn a profit. The potential rewards have to be great to make the investment worthwhile. The periods of greatest innovation in the drug industry—the postwar years and the last two decades—have also been the periods when drug companies raked in the most money. That is as it should be. If you invest $26 billion a year in research and development and make lots of products that people want and need, you ought to reap the benefits. In the hue and cry over high drug prices, people keep forgetting to make this essential connection between profitability and innovation.

Before the Second World War, just six drugs accounted for sixty per cent of all prescriptions, and, for the most part, new drugs were discovered by accident, not by design. In comparison, in the past decade alone, American companies have come out with more than three hundred new medications, treating everything from AIDS to cancer to colds. Today, we expect there to be a drug, either at the pharmacy or in the lab, for every ailment we can name. There's a reason that the United States, the one industrialized country in the world with a relatively free market for drug prices, is responsible each year for half of all major new drugs worldwide. So the next time someone boasts about the price of prescription drugs in Canada, think about the last time you used a drug invented there.

—*James Surowiecki*

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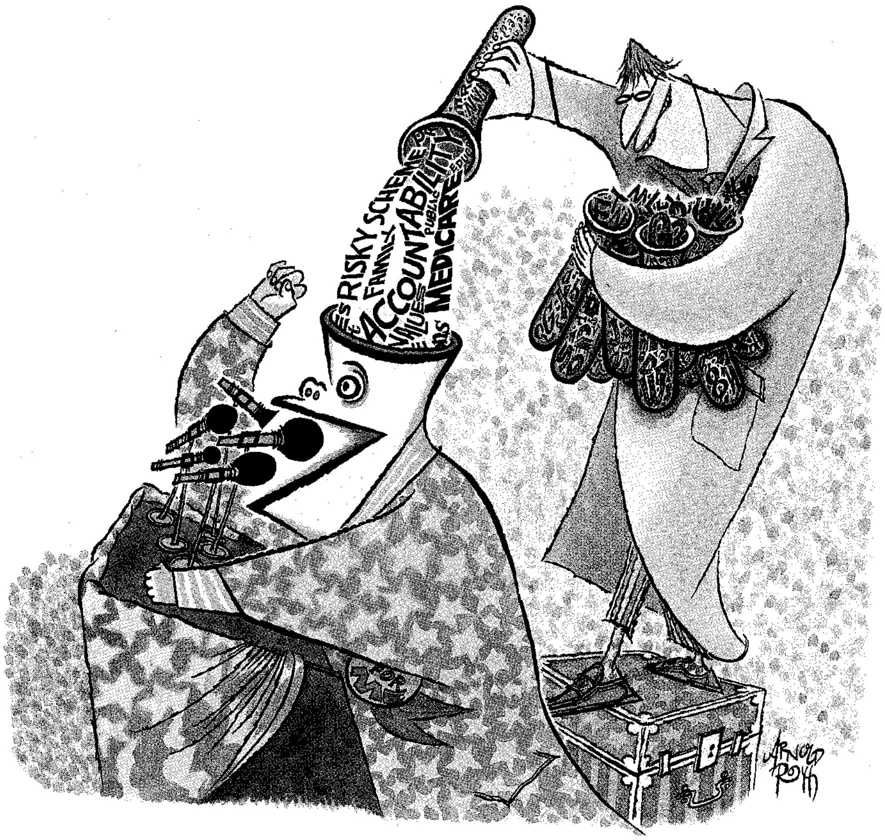
ANNALS OF MARKETING

THE WORD LAB

The mad science behind what the candidates say.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

George W. Bush devoted a whole section of his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention to making fun of Al Gore for his habit of putting down various Bush proposals through the use of the phrase "risky scheme." ("If my opponent had been there at the moon launch, it would have been a 'risky rocket scheme,' " Bush said.) That shut Gore up—he hasn't called anything a risky scheme lately. But then Hillary Rodham Clinton, in her first debate with Rick Lazio, accused him of proposing "risky tax schemes." Coincidence? Bits of language ricochet around in the political world these days. They reappear across wide expanses of time and space, leaping from campaign to campaign.



"The way my words are created," the Republican focus-group guru Frank Luntz says, "is by taking the words of others—average Americans, not politicians."

You could be forgiven for supposing that somewhere in the country (a refitted underground missile silo on the Great Plains?) each party maintains a secret Word Lab. There purposeful young people in gray uniforms sit in front of computer screens, trying out different linguistic combinations. When a magic grouping of words is achieved, bells ring, lights flash, the purposeful young people give each other high fives, and then a directive goes out to all the party's thousands of candidates: it's not "affirmative action" anymore; it's "preferences."

Admittedly, there is no Word Lab per se. There are, however, virtual Word Labs, which generate phrases and rhetorical strategies that are deemed to be politically effective, and then put them into the hands of candidates. Probably the most elaborate one has been run by a Republican pollster named Frank Luntz, who has produced two rhetorical guides for Republicans running for office this year. One is a pocket-size pamphlet called "Right Words," the other a five-pound, four-hundred-and-six-page looseleaf binder called "A Conversation with America 2000," which includes speech texts on many subjects.

Luntz advises his candidates to say "Department of Defense" instead of "Pentagon," "opportunity scholarships" instead of "vouchers," "tax relief" instead of "tax cuts," and "climate change" instead of "global warming." The terms "Washington" and "I.R.S.," Luntz says, always play as super-negative and should be attached to any policy you want to turn people against. "Prosperity" is super-positive. In general, words starting with an "r" or ending with an "-ity" are good—hence "reform" and "accountability" work and "responsibility" really works. Negative is over. (In 1996, Luntz got Newt Gingrich to give him a written pledge that he would never attack President Clinton by name, but Gingrich fell off the wagon after only eleven days.) Calling your opponent a liberal is over, too, although you may call him a politician, or, better yet, a Washington politician. You can attract female voters by using the words "listening" and "children" a lot. ("Why do you think Hillary Clinton went on a 'Listening Tour' of New York?" Luntz asks.) Specifics are better than generalities—that's why Al Gore, who Luntz says definitely reads his stuff, reframed George W. Bush's tax cut in his acceptance speech as a Diet Coke a day, rather than $1.3 trillion. If you're going to attack, do it through rhetorical questions—that's why Rick Lazio often says, on the campaign trail, "Can you name one single thing that Hillary Clinton has ever done for New York?"

I first encountered Luntz in person the day before the Republican Convention opened, in Philadelphia. Luntz recently decided to get out of politics to concentrate on corporate and media clients, and made a deal with MSNBC to run opinion-research sessions during

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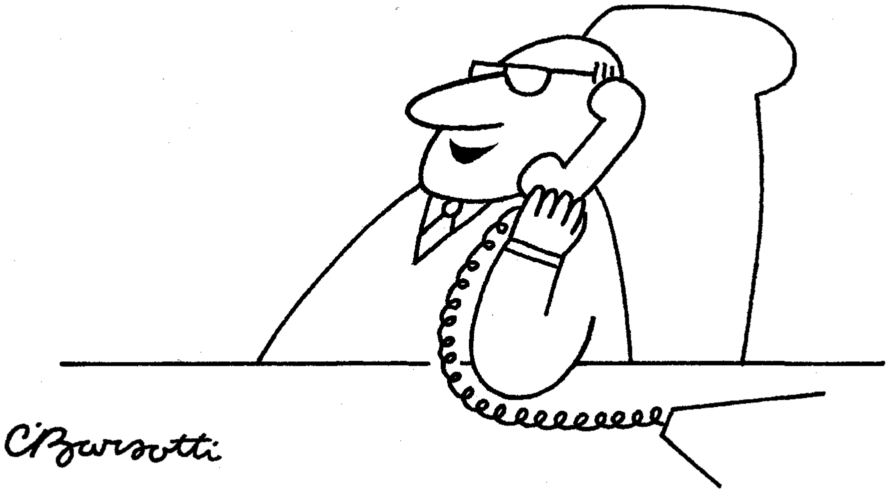

"Hi, hon. Guess who's going to be on national television apologizing to the American public."

• •

both conventions, in which he would demonstrate how swing voters were reacting to the show. This was the first session. Thirty-six real people filed into a hotel function room near the Convention hall and seated themselves in three rows of folding chairs, the Leaning Republicans on one side, the Leaning Democrats on the other, the True Undecideds in the middle. Jammed into what little space remained in the room were members of the national political press corps, there to cover the MSNBC coverage of the real people. Luntz bustled in, playing the part of a pollster / geek / minor celebrity. He is a boyish, manic, perpetually mussed man, with a mop of dirty-blond hair and pouty lips. There is usually a gleam in his eye and a mischievous suppressed smile on his lips, as if he'd just got a cosmic joke that he was now going to let everybody else in on—very slowly. He says he sleeps three hours a night, nonconsecutively. This helps him get a lot of work done, but it leaves him with a jazzed, pouchy appearance.

Luntz, who was very good at putting his subjects at ease, asked people to throw out adjectives about the Presidential candidates. Bush drew "aggressive," "vapid," "strong," "opinionated," and "trigger-happy." Gore drew "weak," "charismatic," "indecisive," and "sneaky."

A little later, Luntz instructed people to pick up dials that were next to their chairs. He played a series of Gore and Bush television advertisements on a monitor while they moved their dials in moment-by-moment reaction, clockwise when they were liking what they were seeing, counterclockwise when they weren't. A computer received the electrical impulses from the dials, averaged them, and converted the result into a graph that jerked up and down like a stock table. During breaks between the ads, Luntz alternately made comments about the real people to the media and about the media to the real people, in a sort of infinite regress of opinion formation.

The morning after the Convention ended, I caught up with Luntz and asked him how he gets from the kind of event I had seen to the language he recommends to candidates. "The way I do it, usually, is to hear the words of somebody else," he said. "I can't give you a single example of a word I actually created. The way my words are created is by taking the words of others—average Americans, not politicians. I've moderated an average of a hundred-plus focus groups a year over five years. Thirty instant-response sessions a year"—the ones with the dials—"over three years. I show them language that I've created. Then I leave a line for them to create language for me."

He explained that he had got into the Word Lab business almost accidentally, back in 1992. Like a lot of political consultants, Luntz was a wunderkind (and he still collects baseball cards). He grew up in West Hartford, Connecticut, the son of a dentist and "a rather strict Jewish mom who'd allow me anything I wanted if it was for my intellect, and nothing I wanted if it was for fun." He was reading news magazines, he says, at the age of six. At seventeen, he was the Connecticut state chairman of the Teen Age Republicans. Before he got to college, he had made himself a protégé of Arthur Finkelstein, the Republican consultant who pioneered the campaign technique of constantly calling your opponent a liberal. As an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania, Luntz was doing campaign work for Republican candidates out of his dorm room. After graduate study in politics at Oxford, he went to work for Richard Wirthlin, who was Ronald Reagan's pollster and, according to Luntz, the man who popularized the use of handheld instant-response dials in politics. His big break came when he was hired by Ross Perot, back in the early days of Perot's first Presidential campaign, when he was unstoppably popular.

One day, Luntz was running a focus group in Detroit to test Perot television ads. There were three: a biography, a Perot speech, and testimonials from other people. "In these sessions," he told me, "I find the consensus and try to destroy it. Build and strip. What I had found was that you couldn't strip people away from Perot." But at the session in Detroit, by mistake, Luntz ran the ads in reverse order—the testimonials, the speech, and then the biography—and found that the people there didn't like Perot at all. His opinions seemed intemperate if they didn't rest on the foundation of his impressive rags-to-riches life story. The lesson, Luntz says, was that "the order in which you give information determines how people think."

That got Luntz into seriously experimenting with language. In 1994, Newt Gingrich, who had for years been producing lists of positively and negatively valenced words for Republican use, hired Luntz as pollster for the Contract with America, which now stands as an early field test of a standard national rhetoric in local campaigns. Luntz also worked in Rudolph Giuliani's mayoral campaigns,

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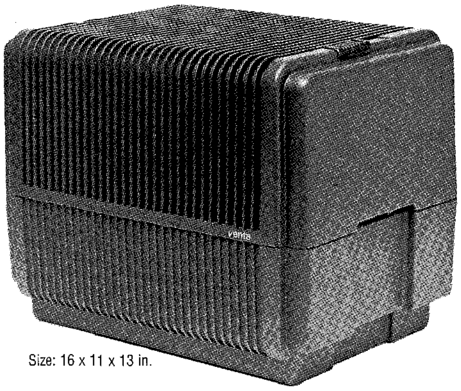

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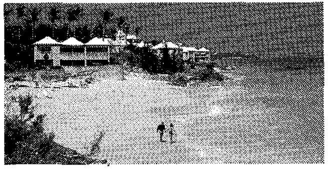

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and Giuliani's departure from the Senate race may have had something to do with Luntz's decision to abandon politics, since he unabashedly worships the guy.

Early in his New York politics period, Luntz encountered Tony Schwartz, a legendarily eccentric consultant (he rarely leaves his apartment) who is still best known for the television ad he did for Lyndon Johnson's Presidential campaign in 1964. (It was the one that showed a little girl plucking the petals off a daisy, and expertly garrotted Johnson's opponent, Barry Goldwater, without even mentioning him.) In 1973, Schwartz published a book called "The Responsive Chord," in which he declared that the way to persuade people is not to present them with a new thought but to find out what they already think (e.g., Goldwater has an itchy trigger finger) and tap into it. "I literally sat at Tony Schwartz's feet, for three sessions," Luntz told me. "No one touches him. Ever has. Ever will." The purpose of his research sessions with voters, he says, is Schwartzian: to derive political language from them, reprocess it, and then play it back to a mass audience.

I asked Luntz if there was a way I could enter a true Word Lab, in which political rhetoric was manufactured. "Why doesn't *The New Yorker* sponsor a focus group on language?" he said. I took this proposal back to the magazine, which agreed to pay Luntz's out-of-pocket expenses if he'd agree not to charge a fee on top of that.

The event took place on a Tuesday evening late in the summer, in Towson, Maryland, a middle-class suburb of Baltimore, at the office of an outfit called Assistance in Marketing. I sat behind a one-way mirror, looking into a windowless, fluorescent-lit room with a semicircle of folding chairs. A dozen subjects filed in and sat down. By Luntz's design, they were all white, all in their thirties, forties, and fifties, all voters in the 1996 Presidential election, and all educated past high school. Also, Luntz had barred self-described liberals from the group, to correct for the tendency of Marylanders to skew to the left of the country as a whole. Focus groups are meant to compensate for the main deficiency of polls, which is that they can't pick up on any aspect of voter consciousness which lies outside the questions asked. The participants in a focus group should be able to free-associate, more or less, under the prodding of the leader. The group has to be homogeneous enough to reveal the shadings of opinion within one category of voters.

Luntz walked into the room and asked the subjects to introduce themselves: Melody, a church secretary; Don, retired; Bob, a computer contractor; Gary, in refrigeration; John, an electrical designer; Barry, an accountant; Lew, another accountant; Madeline, a retired art teacher; Karen, who was home-schooling her kids; Alan, who was studying to be an elementary-school teacher; Nanci, yet another accountant; and Tim, a general contractor.

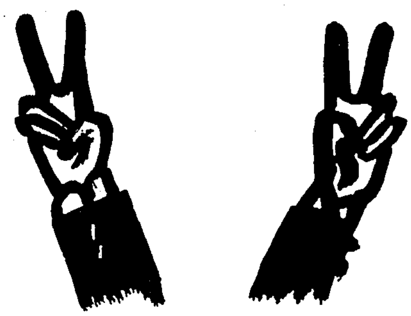
"I want to give you a word, and I want you to tell me how you'd define it," Luntz said. "If someone said 'quality of life,' what would it mean to you?"

People threw out phrases: "A comfortable living." "Health care." "Security." "Comfort zone." "Safety." "Not having to worry." "Not eking out a living."

"Which is more important?" Luntz asked them. "I don't want you to tell me what you think I want to hear. I want you to tell me the truth. Physical condition or money and finances? Who would say physical?" Nearly all the hands went up. Luntz grinned. "Bullshit! You talked to me about money! You did not say 'health.' You said 'money.' "

That loosened them up. After they talked for a few minutes about their worries—crime, drugs, bad schools, debt, errant children—Luntz said, "When I say the word 'government,' what comes to mind first?" He went around the semicircle, pointing at the people one by one.

"I guess the President and the Vice-President, the staff, the Senate, the



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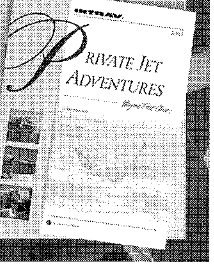

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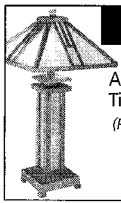

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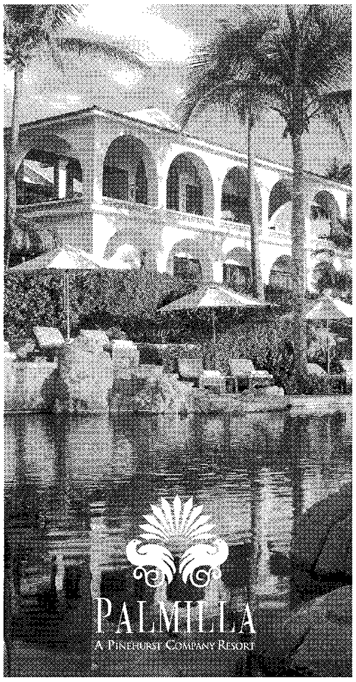

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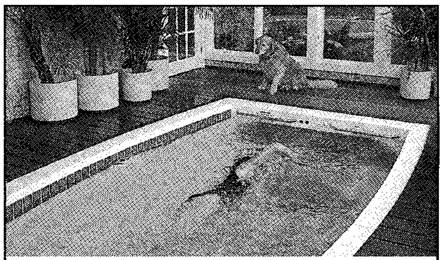

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House, those kinds of things," Melody said.

"Controlling," Don said.

"Providing security for people," Bob said.

"Laws," Gary said.

"Bureaucracy," John said.

"Wasteful bureaucracy," Barry said.

"Laws," Lew said.

"Bureaucracy," Madeline said.

"Corruption," Karen said.

"Liars," Alan said.

"Corruption," Nanci said.

"A lot of regulations," Tim said. "A lot of stuff that I don't need to put up with. They could leave me alone a little bit. I would be a bigger company if I could have two things: a little less law, and a little more help."

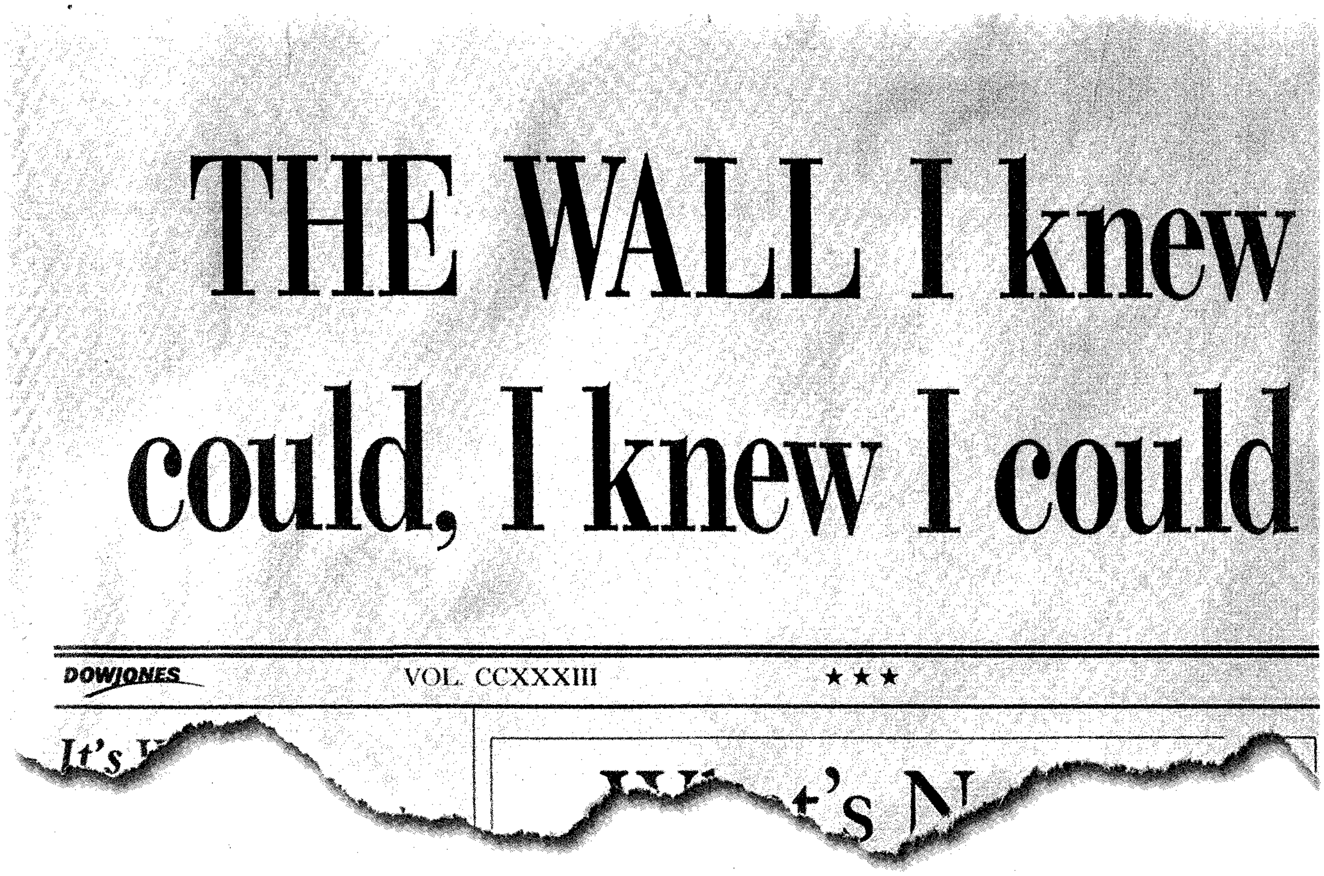
Luntz's eyes lit up. Language production! "Hmm," he said. "That's an interesting phrase." He turned from Tim to address the whole group. "What's your reaction to that phrase?"

Tim's phrase—"a little less law and a little more help"—did, indeed, seem to open a vein, and the group spent a good while talking about how awful government, laws, and politicians were. Elected officials were all crooks, they were bought and paid for by special interests, they cared only about power. Luntz asked the group how many would like to see the entire Congress thrown out of office. Six hands went up.

After some more talk, Luntz went to an easel and wrote five words: "Opportunity," "Community," "Responsibility," "Accountability," "Society"—those good "-ity" words. "When you think of what matters most to you in life," he asked, "of all of these, which matters most to you?" When he canvassed people's opinions, "opportunity" won, "accountability" was second, and "community" was last.

Luntz asked what the word "opportunity" meant to people, and as they called out answers he wrote snatches of wording on his easel: "right to choose," "personal control," "no obstacles," "everyone gets a chance," "founding principle of the country." Then the group voted among these phrases. "Founding principle" won, "everyone gets a chance" was second, and "right to choose" was third. Luntz handed out a sheet of paper to the subjects and ducked into the room where I was sitting. "You have the Republican and Democratic definitions of opportunity right there," he said. "The Republican is 'right to choose,' and the Democratic is 'everyone gets a chance.' Individual versus global."

The sheet of paper was an exercise on inheritance taxes. He asked people what they would most want to eliminate: an estate tax, an inheritance tax, or a death tax. Death tax won big. They vented for a while about how deeply unfair it was: you work hard your whole life and the government takes it all away at the end. Then Luntz asked them how much they thought you were allowed to pass on after your death without incurring a tax. All the nonaccountants guessed way too low. He told them that the actual figure was six hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. "Now that you know that,"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Luntz said, "would anyone not want to abolish the tax?" Nobody raised a hand.

The point here was that if you introduce a subject using language that will produce a strong opinion no subsequent information will get people to change their minds. By way of delivering the coup de grâce, Luntz said, "Bill Gates—his children. Billions! Tens of billions if we abolish this tax! Ross Perot. Steve Jobs. Should they have to pay a death tax?" Only one vote changed.

After the session was over, we made a dash to the Baltimore/Washington International Airport, arriving at the gate, in accordance with company policy at Luntz Research, just before the final boarding call. On our flight to Newark, we talked about what Luntz thought the lessons of the focus group were.

"There's a lot of fear just beneath the surface," he said. "Voters are better off than they were five years ago, but what are they looking for? That safety net. That's why health care and prescription drugs matter so much. One of the candidates is going to figure out how to put health care in quality-of-life terms. Al Gore's got the right issue, but not the right rhetoric. He's got to personalize it. He's got to talk about his son and how grateful he is that he had health care. He should say, 'No amount of money can buy that peace of mind.' "

Luntz went on, "If I'm George Bush? I heard the phrase 'Don't we have enough laws?' 'Under Clinton-Gore, we passed *x* laws. Isn't that enough? Maybe, just maybe, people would be a little freer. A little more opportunity. The sad thing, Al, is that every time you pass a law someone loses a little freedom.' "

Sometimes, on a plane at night, isolated from the ordinary markers of time and place, you can get into a hopped-up, soaring mental state, and Luntz's face shone as he caromed from thought to thought. He got onto the subject of Bush's proposed tax cut, and why it was playing negatively, even though voters hate paying taxes. "That's simple," he said. "If he defends the numbers, he loses. If he personalizes it, he wins big. Congressional Republicans get dragged into the numbers. They appear on the Sunday talk shows and talk about numbers. It's like quicksand: the more you struggle, the deeper you sink."

Luntz's customary suppressed smile turned into a big beam. He liked that phrase. "The quicksand theory of taxation communication," he said. "It'll stick. I'll bet you a thousand dollars: someone will use it within twenty-one days of its appearing in your publication. Because 'taxation' and 'communication' rhyme, people will remember. Also, the word 'quicksand' is very visual. And a great fear. It's how people don't want to die."

Here came a new thought. Sinking in quicksand is a television and movie trope. Has anyone ever actually seen quicksand in real life? Is there even such a thing as quicksand? It doesn't matter: the image is so powerful that its lack of a factual basis is no impediment to its viability. Luntz jumped, trium-

I could, I knew I
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phantly, to the over-all lesson. "Perception is reality," he said. "In fact, perception is more real than reality."

To venture inside a Word Lab is to lose your virginity: life isn't ever quite the same again. It becomes impossible to listen to prominent politicians speak without being aware of how much of what you're hearing is Word Lab product. Did the phrase "Real Plans for Real People" just pop into George Bush's head one day? Did Al Gore become outraged about prescription-drug prices for seniors just because they're outrageous? Did President Clinton build the "bridge to the twenty-first century" all by himself?

It won't do, however, to take the position that politics used to be high-minded and substantive and has been ruined by manufacturers of perception. The Word Lab, in various guises, has been around for a very long time. Rhetoric, Plato has Socrates say, "has no need to know the truth about things but merely to discover a technique of persuasion, so as to appear among the ignorant to have more knowledge than the expert." Half a century ago, George Orwell, in "1984," presented the manipulation of language as one of the scariest features of a totalitarian society. Luntz, who is a big Orwell fan, told me that when he read "1984" as a young man, he found it so absorbing that he brought it to a White Sox game in Chicago, couldn't stop reading, and twice missed Greg Luzinski hitting a ball out of Comiskey Park.

But, if rhetoric is old, focus groups are relatively recent—so recent that I was able to lend a videotape of the Towson focus group to the man who invented them, the eminent sociologist Robert K. Merton. Just before Pearl Harbor, a colleague brought him in to help the federal government test audience response to morale-building government radio programs, and what Merton would still prefer to call "the focussed group-interview" was born.

Today, Merton is a University Professor emeritus at Columbia, and lives and works in an apartment on Riverside Drive, close to the university. He has been building up ill feeling about the misuse of his creation for many years, so when I spoke with him I was plainly tapping into a substantial reservoir. We talked in his apartment, in a small room filled with books and papers. On the walls were framed honorary degrees from places like Harvard, Yale, and Oxford. Merton's conversation is, in effect, footnoted: he often stops himself at an important point, goes to a file, and pulls out the supporting research paper.

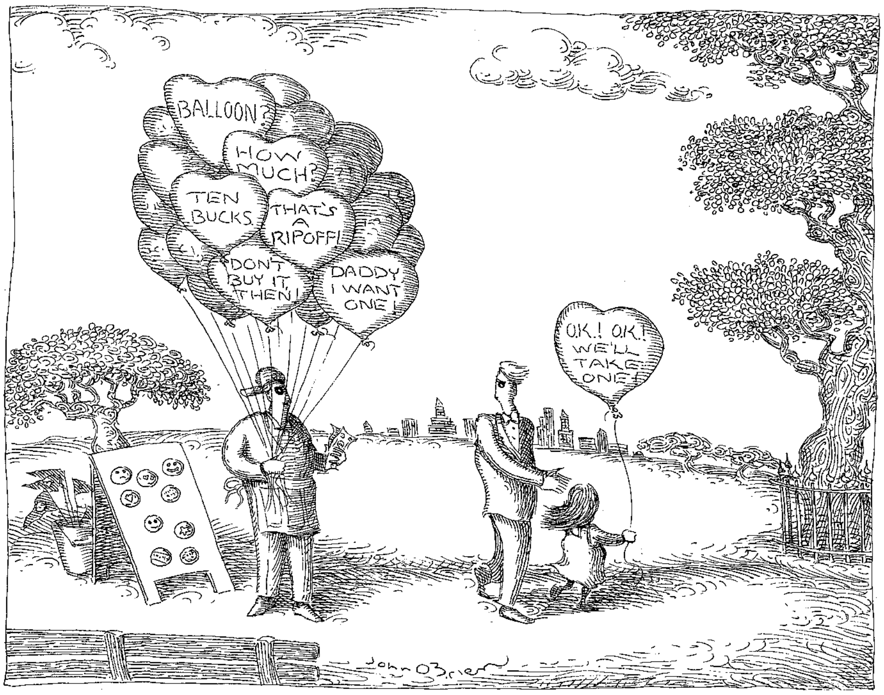
"There's so much hokum in focus groups, at times bordering on fraud," he said. "There are now professional focus-group subjects who get themselves on lists. Even when the subjects are well selected, focus groups are supposed to be merely sources of ideas that need to be researched." Merton pointed out several ways in which he considered Luntz's method to be nonstandard. He asked me to check on the method for finding the participants, and it turned out that some of them came from a database maintained by the office where the focus group was held, and might have been in focus groups before. There was no formal report of the findings, and therefore no independent review or testing of the findings, either. There was no clear way to determine how well the resulting rhetoric worked, once candidates began to use it, except to declare, ex post facto, that the winner's slogans had been works of genius and the loser's idiotic. Luntz's own techniques didn't accord with the techniques Merton had established in the forties.

How should he have run the group? "You'd take statements by candidates," Merton said. "You'd say, 'Here's a statement by Congressman Jones. What comes to mind?' Get people to talk about actual experiences. When Luntz asked them to respond to the phrase 'quality of life,' they were improvising about an abstraction, not reporting on their actual experiences. These people are role-playing, as members of a focus group."

Merton makes a persuasive case that Luntz's Word Lab is not a true example of social-science research. So what is it?

Anybody who has to speak regularly to live audiences sees that some combinations of words do produce more and better reactions than others, and starts using those combinations of words more often. That's a feedback mechanism, in which the audience affects the speaker's use of language. A very select few get to use people like Frank Luntz, who combine audience feedback, speechwriting, and—the extra element—a research technique that at least wears scientific garb and just might have some scientific power, even if it's not used according to Merton's rules.

What propels politicians toward Word Labs is insecurity, about what voters really want and about how to talk to them. In the heyday of machine politics, you found out what voters wanted by asking state bosses, who found out by asking city bosses, who found out by asking ward bosses, who found out by asking precinct captains. Now that television rather than party machinery is the principal means of communication with the electorate, everything depends on persuading people you can't see, and who are weakly attached to politics anyway, through the use of a very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TEN BUCKS
THAT'S A RIPOFF!
DON'T BUY IT, THEN!
DADDY I WANT ONE!
OK.! OK.! WE'LL TAKE ONE!
John O'Brien

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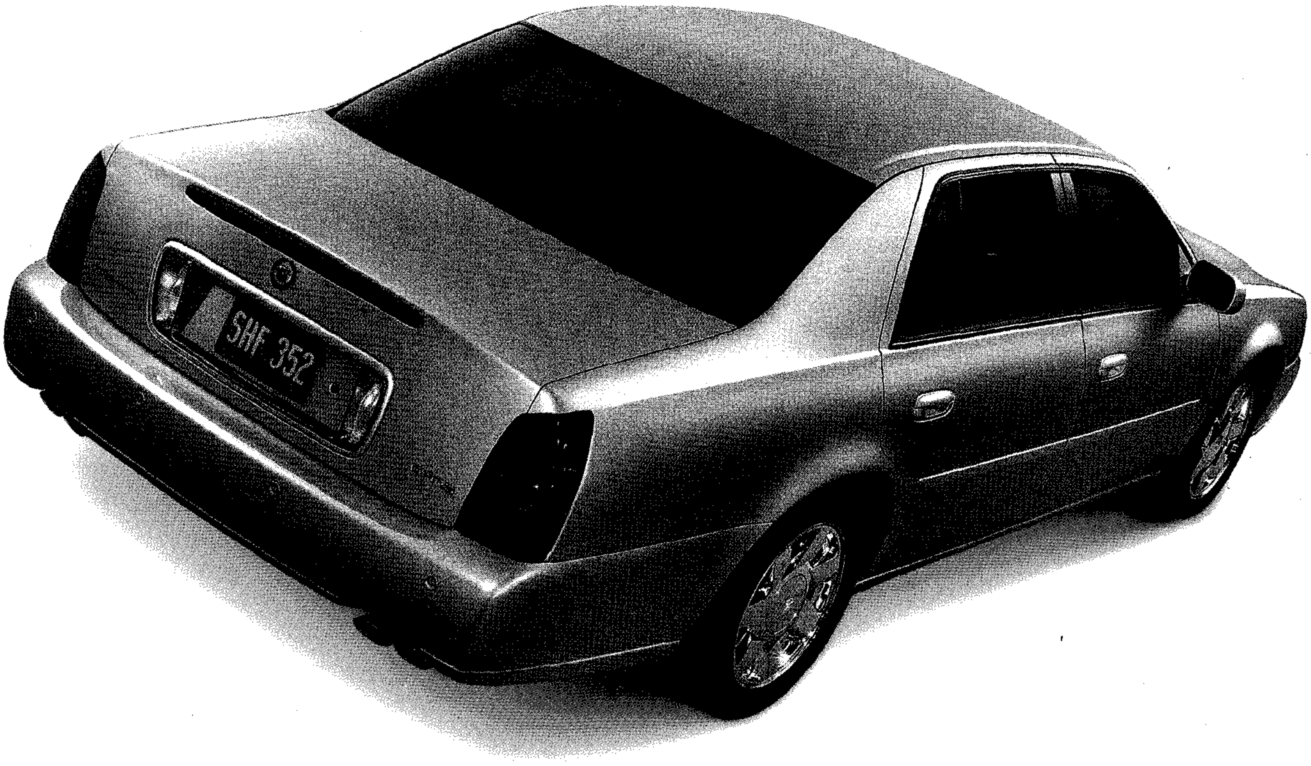

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few words and images. Consultants are the shamans in the political tribe—the ones who, through some combination of technical knowledge and good intuition, can supply verbiage that might make the difference between winning and losing. Would you dare not to use the Word Lab, if you were running for office?

The best explanation I've heard for how a Word Lab achieves its effect on voters came from George Lakoff, a cognitive linguist at the University of California, Berkeley. "Frank Luntz?" Lakoff said when I called him up. "I have his book right here in front of me. Luntz has an amazing ear. As a linguist, I look at him and say, 'He knows how to frame the debate.' "

Lakoff explained that Luntz and people like him are, without realizing it, working in a field called frame semantics, which was developed in the seventies by a linguist named Charles Fillmore. Rattling around inside the human mind are collections of related words that linguists call semantic fields. The semantic field for politics and government would include words like "tax," "politician," "Congress," and "program." Fillmore hypothesized that these semantic fields are produced by mental "frames" and that, with just the right phrase, you can get all the words in the political semantic field to click neatly into place in one frame or another. "Risky tax scheme" is meant to activate a frame in which voters associate Republicans with financial instability, and "Washington politician" is supposed to activate a frame in which voters are suspicious of government and, perhaps, of Democrats, as the party of government. The words "choice" and "life" activate two different frames for organizing the semantic field for abortion.

A few years ago, Lakoff wrote a book called "Moral Politics," in which he said that the way to understand the two parties, rhetorically, is through the analogy of the nation to a family. Conservatives use a "strict father" frame and liberals use a "nurturant parent" frame. Words like "coddle" and "backbone," for example, activate the strict-father frame. Words like "care" and "health" activate the nurturant-parent frame. Because swing voters have elements of both the strict-father and the nurturant-parent frames, the way to capture them is to find a word or phrase that will cause the semantic field for politics and government to snap into one or the other frame. Lakoff, who is a liberal—whoops! "progressive"—helped start an organization in Washington called the FrameWorks Institute, which is meant to be a Word Lab for the other team.

Since the whole point of a Word Lab is to find out what voters already think and then design rhetoric to persuade them that politicians agree with it, the process leads to politicians' being shaped by, rather than shaping, public opinion. Especially in peaceable, prosperous times like these, the Word Lab pushes candidates toward a peculiar kind of convergence. Gore, somehow, had to have a tax-cut plan because Bush had one, and Bush had to have a prescription-drug plan because Gore had one. (And now each is accusing the other of wanting to create a Washington H.M.O. for prescription drugs.) Inside Luntz's Word Lab, you can sense a powerful middle-class ideology that politicians today must accommodate. In shorthand, it is that government as a general proposition is operatically horrible and must always be attacked, never defended, but every specific thing government does is precious and can never be questioned. Public undertakings must be explicitly aimed at helping ordinary families who have strong values—nobody else—but then it's O.K. to bid frantically for votes, with the bidding expressed as the promise of new and generous government benefit programs.

Yes, all right, there are divisive, troublesome issues in America that we've swept under the rug. One day, we'll get around to them! But now it's campaign season, and the Word Lab rules. Washington politicians (if they were allowed to say what they think) might complain about that, but I've been listening to the American people—real people, not élitist phonies—and I say, what's wrong with it? My dad, a hardworking senior, feels the same way, and so do my two sons, who are children and will, with luck, exist in America's future. My wife, who happens to be another hardworking member of the middle class, agrees. Listening to us talk about what we want, playing it back to us at campaign time, and then governing so as to fulfill the promises that have been fashioned from snatches of our language—now, isn't that what responsible, realistic reform is all about? ♦

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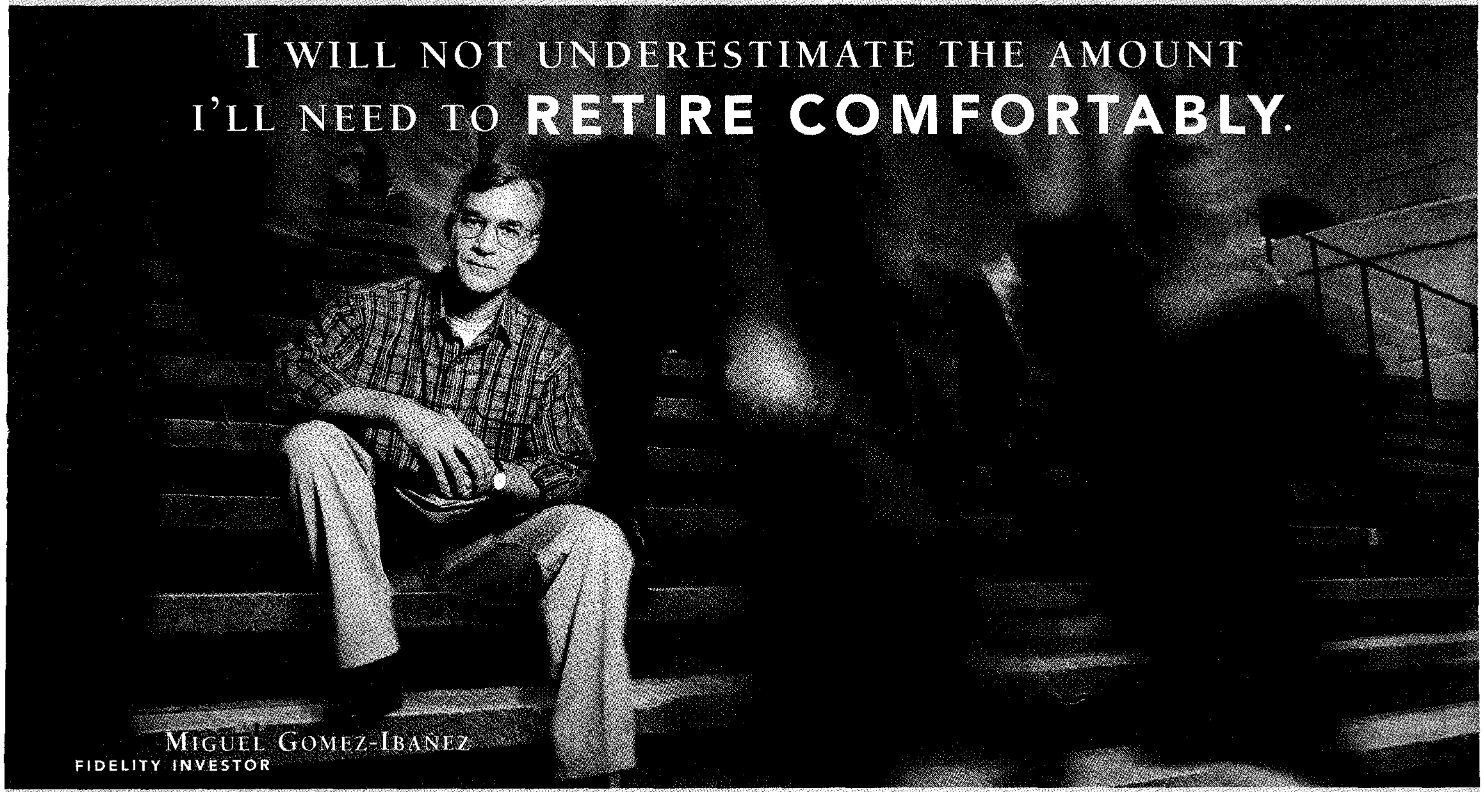
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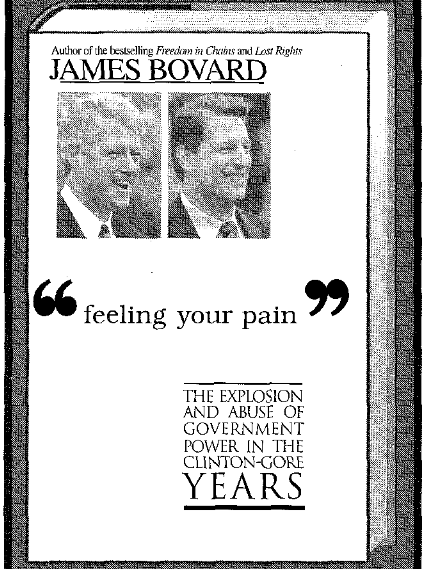

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LIFE AND LETTERS

FAMILY HISTORY

The personal papers of Joseph P. Kennedy.

In the summer of 1969, four or five months before my grandfather Joseph P. Kennedy died, I visited him in Hyannis Port. I was two, and I remember that his room was filled with people, and that a cousin and I were led through what seemed a crowd of knees to his bedside. With some prompting, I performed a curtsy and climbed up to kiss him. At eighty, he was likely the oldest person I had ever seen; left immobile and mute by a stroke several years earlier, he was certainly the most infirm. I was struck that the figure in red pajamas who commanded so much whispered reverence, and whom everyone called by a different name—"Daddy," "the Ambassador," "Mr. Kennedy," "Grandpa"—was silent, motionless, and spectacularly freckled.

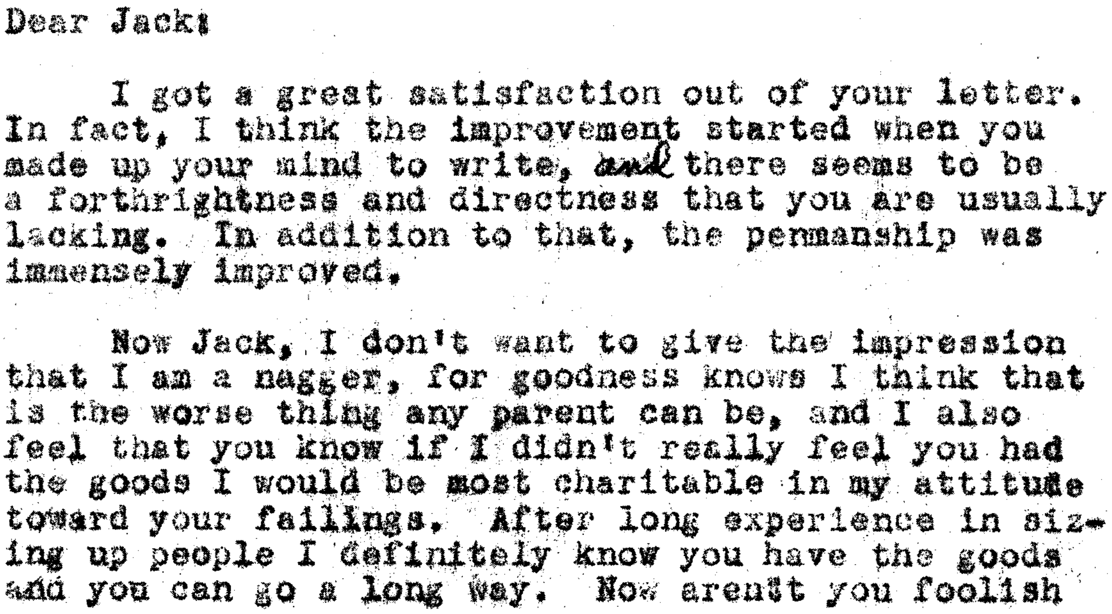
I had always found it difficult when I was growing up to reconcile the grandfather whom I learned about at home with the man whose public roles included, or were said to, father, speculator, film producer, bootlegger, chairman, ambassador, appeaser, philanderer, philanthropist, kingmaker. As I've grown older, I have begun to marvel, too, at how much of my life I have spent among ghosts. These are no malevolent presences. Rather, they are the kind of restless spirits that only the twentieth-century mixture of celebrity, technology, and collective memory could have produced. They lend their names to street signs, schools, V.F.W. posts, expressways, a national center for the performing arts, an airport, a space center. They manifest themselves on the faces of coins and postage stamps. They find themselves revivified for eternity in documentaries, news footage, miniseries and their reruns. Watching the incarnations of these spirits in the media, I've had the impression of looking at a family portrait in a fun-house mirror; I recognize the faces, but sometimes the features are grotesquely distorted.

During his lifetime, Joseph P. Kennedy was stubbornly unyielding to examination; thirty-one years after his death, he remains so. Several years ago, my mother, Jean Kennedy Smith, mentioned that her family still had some of her father's papers; and, curious, I went to the J.F.K. Library, in Boston—where my grandmother had sent most of the papers, in the late nineteen-seventies—to have a look. I found more than two hundred linear feet of documents, largely uncatalogued and in an advanced state of decay. They chronicle Joseph Kennedy's adulthood and the growth of his family. The documents run from before the First World War, when he was a bank examiner; through the thirties and the buildup to the Second World War, when he was named Ambassador to the Court of St. James's; and into the forties, when, following his return from London, he retired from public life. They continue until 1961, the year of his stroke. I went on to unearth, in a warehouse in Queens and in my grandfather's former office in Manhattan, dozens more boxes of professional and personal letters and some memorabilia. (One box contained a tailcoat made in the late thirties, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for "J. F. Kennedy," that still had a handkerchief in the breast pocket.) These documents, along with their curious appendages, chart in personal terms the course of the twentieth century in America.

I once sat next to a man at dinner who said, "So, your grandfather made his money in bootlegging?" It is certainly accurate, as his letters reveal, that in 1922, at the height of Prohibition, he supplied his tenth college reunion with alcohol. But he guarded his privacy zeal-

Joe and Rose Kennedy in Hyannis Port in 1931, with, from left, Bobby, Jack, Eunice, Jean, Pat, Kathleen, Joe, Jr., and Rosemary; a 1934 letter to Jack from his father.

COURTESY JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY (2)



Dear Jack:

I got a great satisfaction out of your letter. In fact, I think the improvement started when you made up your mind to write, and there seems to be a forthrightness and directness that you are usually lacking. In addition to that, the penmanship was immensely improved.

Now Jack, I don't want to give the impression that I am a nagger, for goodness knows I think that is the worse thing any parent can be, and I also feel that you know if I didn't really feel you had the goods I would be most charitable in my attitude toward your failings. After long experience in sizing up people I definitely know you have the goods and you can go a long way. Now aren't you foolish

ously and covered his tracks impeccably, and there are conspicuous gaps in his papers. I was able neither to confirm nor to deny rumors of his deeper or more organized involvement in violations of the Eighteenth Amendment. And the papers do not shed much light on meetings—unsanctioned by the State Department but meticulously recorded by others—with German government officials in the year leading up to the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939. He makes almost no mention of meetings in Hollywood in late 1940, during which he was reported (by Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Darryl Zanuck, and others) to have warned studio executives in the gravest terms against producing films that might be offensive to Hitler's Reich. At the same time, he details very little of what contemporary press accounts describe as his elaborate plan to evacuate Jewish refugees from the expanding boundaries of the German state. His accounts of his interactions with Gloria Swanson never stray from the realm of business and film production. (Her memoirs record more intimate relations.)

Ambassador Kennedy's letters from

THE DISPLACED

Grandma hated the Russians who attacked the Ukrainians
who tormented the Romanians who pissed on everyone's roses
and played around with everyone's wives. This was Rochester, N.Y.,
in the fifties, when all the Displaced Persons moved in and suddenly
even the oaks looked defeated. Grandma believed they came here
so we all could suffer, that soon we'd all dress like undertakers
and march around whispering to the dead. Mr. Schwartzman hired me
to write letters nobody answered. He wrote about Mrs. Tillem's
boarding house, where everyone stank of sardines and spat in the sink;
about his job at the A. & P. providing for everyone else's appetite.
He never wrote about what'd happened to his music or family.
Saturday mornings for two years he spoke Yiddish as I wrote
my twelve-year-old English until I found him hanging in his closet
with a note pinned to his tie: "Live outwardly, objectify!" Yes, Goethe,
famous for beating hexameters on his mistress's back while love-making
because art was long, life was short, and the dead also didn't belong anyplace.

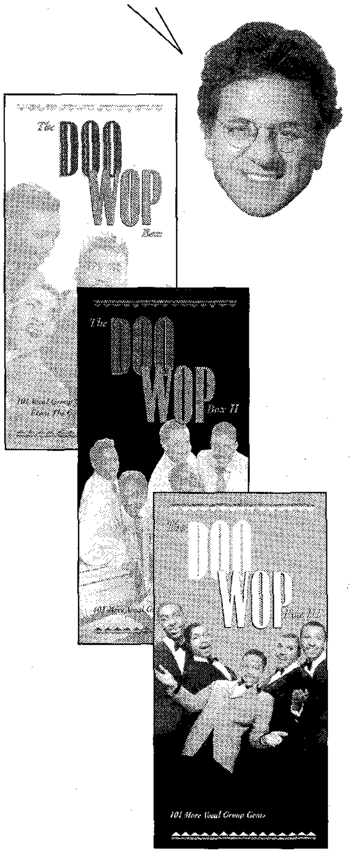
—*Philip Schultz*

London between 1938 and 1940, and also those he wrote following America's entry into the war, reflect concern about his image in the United States. There was a growing rift between him and President Roosevelt, especially over the issue of intervention in the European conflict. While advocating aid to Britain, he warned against direct United States involvement so soon after a global depression, and foresaw only economic devastation, "chaos beyond anybody's dreams," for the British Empire, in the miraculous event of an Allied victory. Kennedy's popularity fell on both sides of the Atlantic, in part because of associations he had formed in England—with, among others, the Astors, the Lindberghs, and Neville Chamberlain—and in part because of his pessimism about Britain's chances in a war with Germany. He returned to the United States, in 1940, amid contradictory rumors: that he was a hawk and an isolationist, pro-Fascist as well as Anglophilic and anti-British. He was also suspected of intending to betray Roosevelt for Wendell Willkie in the election of 1940. There was some truth—and considerable exaggeration—in all of this. His political career ended with his resignation from his post; his public persona never fully recovered.

Kennedy's letters to members of the press include countless thank-you notes, not only to reporters and columnists who made favorable mention of him but to their editors and the owners of their publications as well, regardless of whether he knew them personally. Having observed this practice, and imitated it, early in his public life, he attempted to pass it on to his children. "I would suggest," he wrote in 1946 to Jack, who was then a month away from being elected to a first term in Congress, "that from now on you write a personal note to any magazine or newspaper making a kind reference to you. Baruch"—the financier Bernard Baruch—"has always done that and he has built up a terrific newspaper support out of it. These fellows are like everyone else; they will appreciate hearing from you."

It is odd, and often moving, to touch these crumbling reams of paper, which chronicle lives now ended. It is even stranger to read them without feeling the jolt that some of them—announcements of engagements, births, or deaths—must have conveyed when they were opened for the first time. I have read the letters knowing, as their authors and recipients could not, what would happen to them next. And although I have come to have some sense of my grandfather by reading his papers, my understanding is bounded by the fact that I will never really know him.

—*Amanda Smith*



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To John F. Kennedy, age fourteen.

April 12, 1932

Dear Jack:

In looking over the monthly statement from Choate, I notice there is a charge of $10.80 for suit pressing for the month of March. It strikes me that this is very high and while I want you to keep looking well, I think that if you spent a little more time picking up your clothes instead of leaving them on the floor, it wouldn't be necessary to have them pressed so often.

Also, there are certain things during these times which it might not be a hardship to go without, such as the University hat. I think it would be well to watch all these expenditures in times like these, in order that the bills will not run too high.

To Felix Frankfurter, at the time a visiting professor at Oxford.

December 5, 1933

Dear Felix:

You don't know what a joy it is to receive one of your letters. I save all your very formal ones and expect that Joe will be showing them to his grandchildren when he talks about that great man Professor Frankfurter, or Judge Frankfurter, whatever your pleasure is to be.

If I were to send you a short summary of the whole situation in the country I would just say "confusion." . . .

Father Coughlin, who has made terrific attacks on [Al] Smith, is becoming a very dangerous proposition in the whole country. He has the most terrific radio following that you can imagine and to my way of thinking he is becoming an out and out demagogue with a rather superficial knowledge of fundamentals, but a striking way of making attacks that pleases the masses, with a beautiful voice that stirs them frightfully.

Of course, I believe that if Roosevelt would turn against any of the policies that Coughlin is advocating, Coughlin would turn at once against Roosevelt unless he felt that the Apostolic Delegate at Washington might demand his silence. He has his own Bishop on his side and the Catholic Hierarchy are unable to do anything with him whatsoever.

Roosevelt seems to be taking all the criticisms smiling and I doubt if he has lost any of his popularity with the people. They are all convinced he is a good man trying to do the best he can for all.

What the future holds in store for us God only knows.

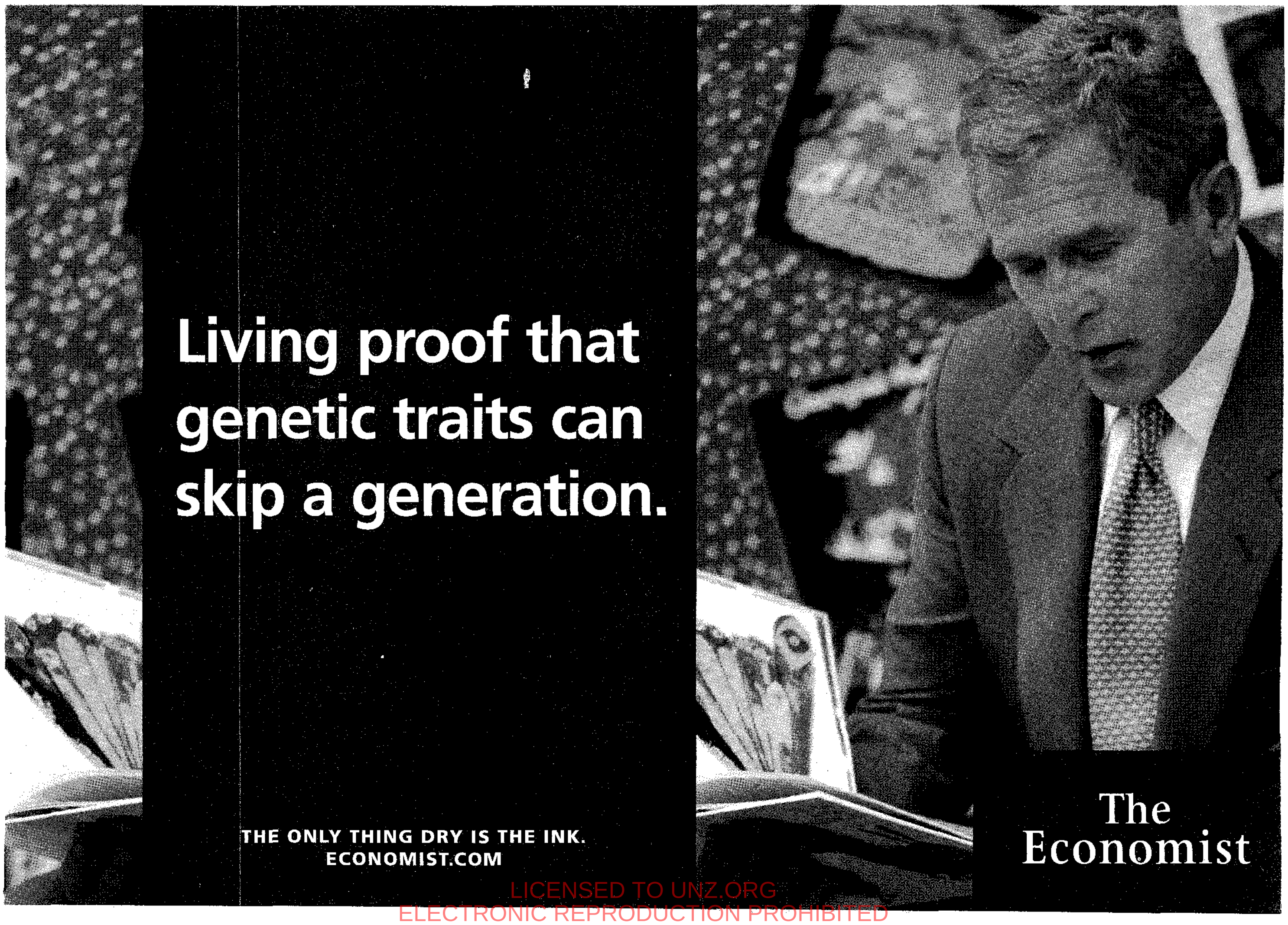
To Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., age eighteen.

May 4, 1934

Dear Joe:

Mother and I received your two letters this morning, and we were delighted to see how much you got out of the trip through the Continent. Mother wishes you to get an enlarged picture with the Coliseum as a background. If you can, bring it home when you come.

I was very pleased and gratified at your observations of the German situation. I think they show a very keen sense of perception, and I think your conclusions are very sound. Of course, it is still possible that Hitler went far beyond his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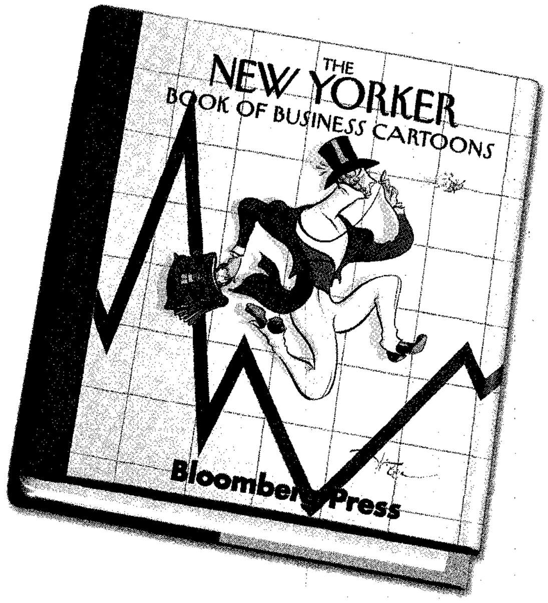
Very funny business, indeed!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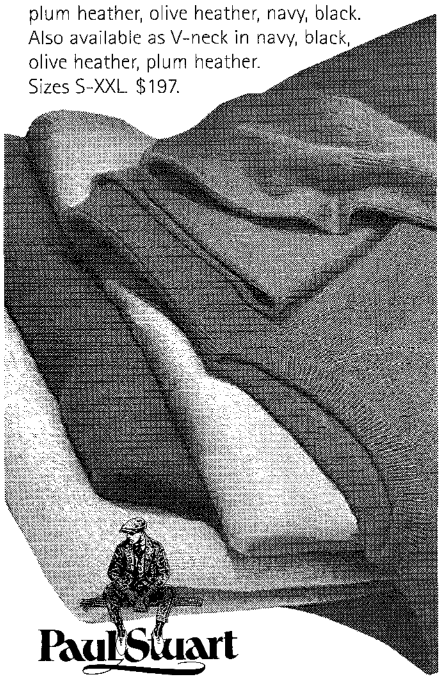

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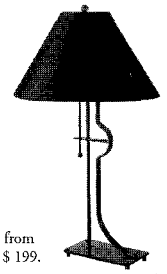

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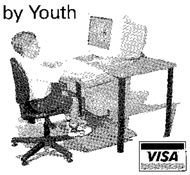

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necessary requirements in his attitude towards the Jews, the evidence of which may be very well covered up from the observer who goes in there at this time.

I am interested in following out your impressions to see what reason you give for his present attitude towards the Catholics. If he wanted to re-unite Germany, and picked the Jew as the focal point of his attack, and conditions in Germany are now so completely those of his own making, why then is it necessary to turn the front of his attack on the Catholics? When you go in there next time, I think it would be interesting to make some observations on this point. At any rate, I think you show a great development in your mind in the last six or seven months. It is most gratifying to both Mother and me.

Now as to the situation here. Mother and I have spent the weekend at the White House with the President and, after we attended the Gridiron Dinner, he and I sat down in his study from twelve o'clock until three o'clock in the morning and talked over all the prospective legislation. He definitely does not want to turn to anything inflationary, if he can help it. He is of the opinion that industry in America has received a tremendous impetus, and of its own strength should carry on to a successful conclusion. . . .

He said that he thought I had an obligation to do something, and then suggested that I go to Ireland as Minister because there is a very strained situation between the Irish Free State and the English Government. He thought it would be a very nice thing for me to go back as Minister to a country from which my grandfather had come as an immigrant. But Mother and I talked it over, and we decided that this wasn't of any particular interest, and I told him so. Now, he has in mind another position in Washington which he hasn't made clear to me as yet.

To Felix Frankfurter, who was now at Harvard Law School.

October 9, 1934

Dear Felix:

I am not really as courteous as you are in answering letters by hand, but I know you will excuse under the pressure of business.

As to Joe's course of study [at Harvard College], I agree entirely with your point of view. I very likely did not make myself clear to your bride about what I hoped you would be able to do as far as Joe goes. The assistant graduate manager of athletics sent me word that he thought Joe was taking a much too difficult course and his Mother received a letter from the Passionist Priests with whom Joe had made a retreat, stating that his point of view was not what they had hoped it would be and his Mother became unduly concerned. Judge Burns [John J. Burns, a former Harvard Law professor who was general counsel to the S.E.C.] said that the philosophy course in his first year might not be the best thing for him. I wrote him and told him all these facts, but said, of course, I would be governed by his decision and made no suggestions as to what I thought he should do. He told me he was going to consult with you just the minute he had time, but with courses in the morning and football in the afternoon I really think he has been fairly busy. I certainly would not urge you to take any position other than the one you outline, because in the first place I know you wouldn't and in the second place I really want to do the best thing for Joe. By that I mean that I don't wish to force on him anything he can't see himself. I still hope to be able to make suggestions and possibly help direct him. That's as far as I ever want to go. . . .

I had dinner with the President Wednesday and stayed with him until after 1 o'clock in the morning, just the two of us, and I know no one in my life who seems so anxious to do a real job for everyone as he does. If he fails it will be because those that give him advice are not competent to do so.

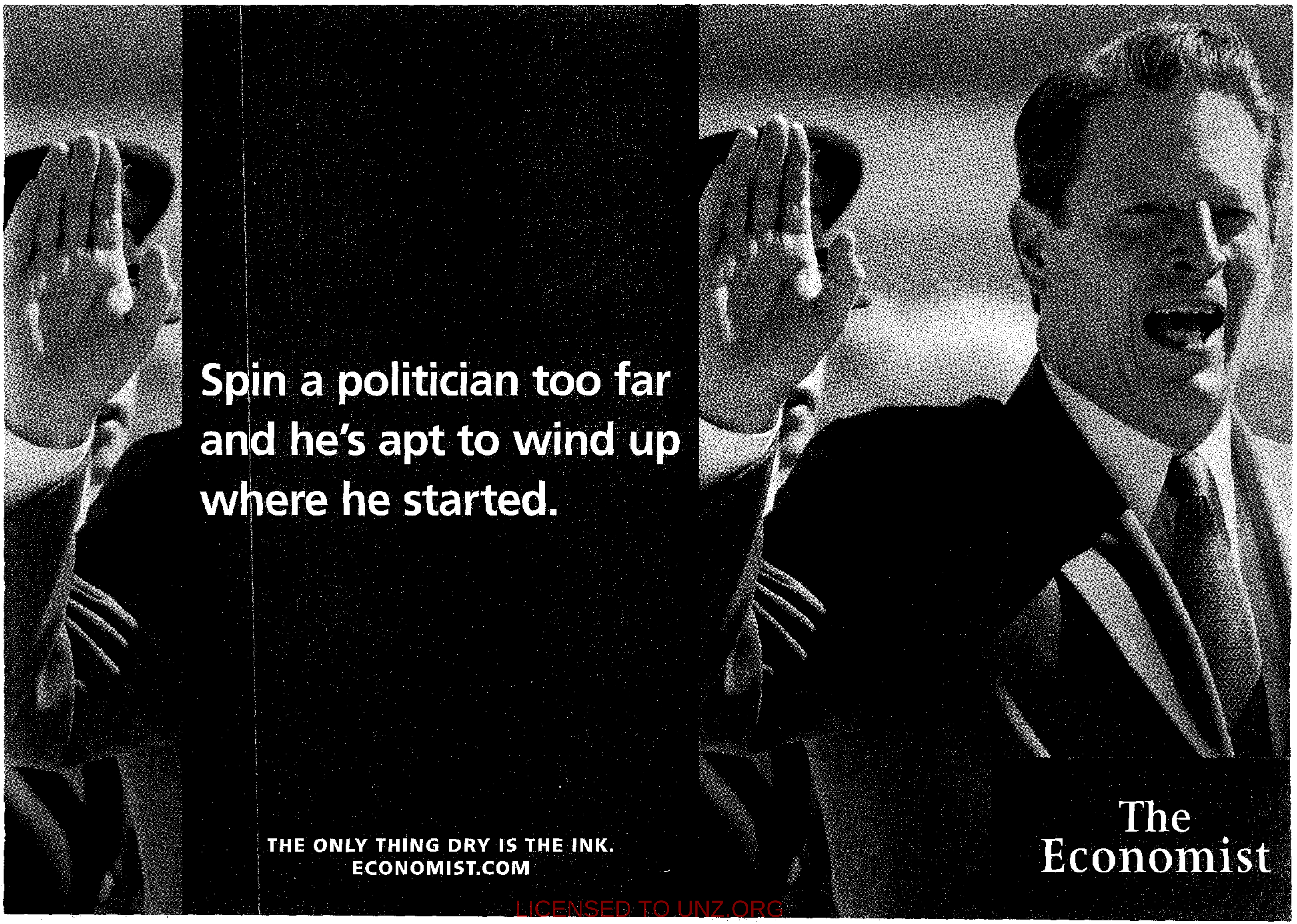
To John F. Kennedy, age seventeen.

December 5, 1934

Dear Jack:

I got a great satisfaction out of your letter. In fact, I think the improvement started when you made up your mind to write, and there seems to be a forthrightness and directness that you are usually lacking. In addition to that, the penmanship was immensely improved.

Now Jack, I don't want to give the impression that I am a nagger, for goodness knows I think that is the worst thing any parent can be, and I also feel that you know if I didn't really feel you had the goods I would be most charitable in my attitude toward your failings. After long experience in sizing up people I definitely know you have the goods and you can go a long way. Now aren't you foolish not to get all there is out of what God has given you and what you can do with it yourself. After all, I would be lacking even as a friend if I did not urge you to take advantage of the qualities you have. It is very difficult to make up fundamentals that you have neglected when you were very young and that is why I am always urging you to do the best you can. I am not expecting too much and I will not be disappointed if you don't turn out to be a real genius, but I think you can be a really worthwhile citizen with good judgment and good understanding.



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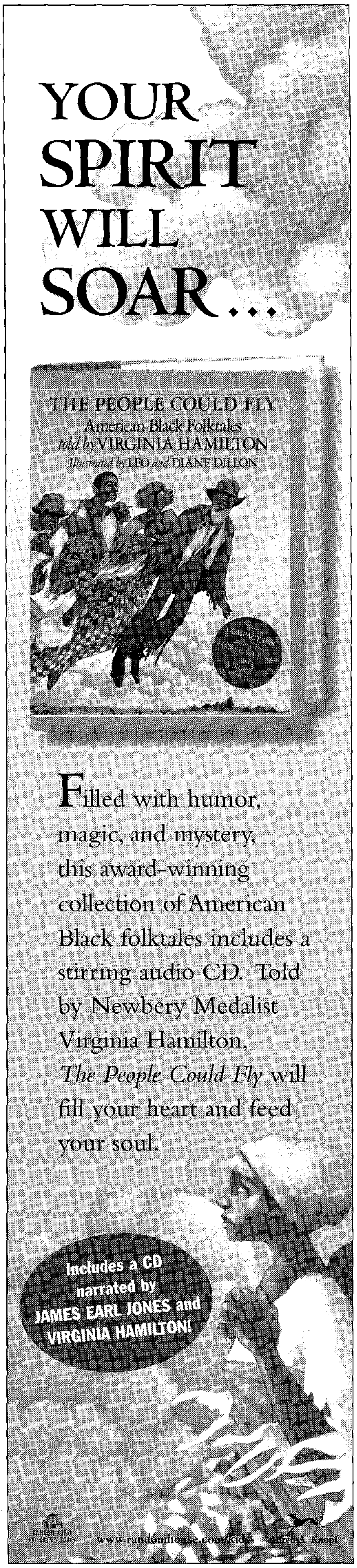
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To Franklin Roosevelt: cablegram draft.

[London]
2/10/35

Don't worry about election in America. You could be elected anything in England. If the papers and businessmen of America gave you ten per cent of the deal that they give you here you would be President for the rest of your life.

I am seeing everybody and it is amazing your personal popularity and I don't mean particularly government circles.

To Missy LeHand, F.D.R.'s assistant: telegram.

February 17, 1937

If after what I called the airplane company yesterday morning they don't throw the stone crabs off the plane for spite you will have them in Washington tomorrow afternoon. They are being cooked and packed in dry ice and leaving here at nine-thirty Thursday morning. In fact the head of the airplane company said he would much rather carry stone crabs than carry one Kennedy the worst crab he ever knew. For a while yesterday it looked like they were going to put a seat on one of the wings. They told me today they wished I'd gone because the plane came down in Raleigh and stayed there all night. I certainly would have enjoyed that. Anyhow the crab will be there tomorrow and they better be good. Best to all.

Joseph Kennedy had been named Ambassador to the Court of St. James's in early December, 1937, and was awaiting Senate confirmation.

To Senator James F. Byrnes, a South Carolina Democrat.

December 23, 1937

Dear Jim:

I wouldn't really give a damn what most people think of the new appointment if in my own heart I thought it was the thing to do, but for your opinion I have the greatest respect. . . . If you had misgivings about it there would be reason for me to have. . . .

I haven't any idea how well I will get along abroad, either from the point of view of doing very much for the country, or doing a job of which my friends will feel proud, but if I don't get the results that I feel are necessary I would get out at once.

I will stick along with this administration as long as I can do any good or as long as I have the confidence of the leaders, regardless of the inconveniences that accrue.

To Charles Lindbergh.

London
November 12, 1938

Dear Colonel Lindbergh,

I was very pleased to hear from you and, of course, I have been keeping up with you in the newspapers. I don't know which is the worst—the Russian attacks on you or the columnists' attacks on me for my Navy Day speech. However, I think we both are a good deal more honest in our convictions than the critics.

I am hopeful that something can be worked out, but this last drive on the Jews in Germany has really made the most ardent hopers for peace very sick at heart. Even assuming that the reports from there are colored, isn't there some way to persuade them it is on a situation like this that the whole program of saving Western civilization might hinge. It is more and more difficult for those seeking peaceful solutions to advocate any plan when the papers are filled with such horror. So much is lost when so much could be gained.

I hope you will let us know when you come to London, as Rose and I look forward to seeing you both. Tell Mrs. Lindbergh that everyone is talking about her beautiful book.

All kinds of good luck to you and may your stay in Germany be pleasant and interesting and do let me hear from you from time to time.

To Neville Chamberlain: telegram draft.

March 18, 1939

Affectionate greetings on your birthday. I count upon your courage never failing and your strength increasing. I have been one with you in your striving for peace and have nothing but admiration for the convictions you so eloquently expressed last night. Opinions may change but underlying conviction changes only to deepen.

To Will Hays: telegram.

November 12, 1939
12:30 A.M.

I have just seen "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington." I consider this one of the most disgraceful things I have ever seen done to our country. To permit this film to be shown in foreign countries and to give people the impression that anything like this could happen in the United

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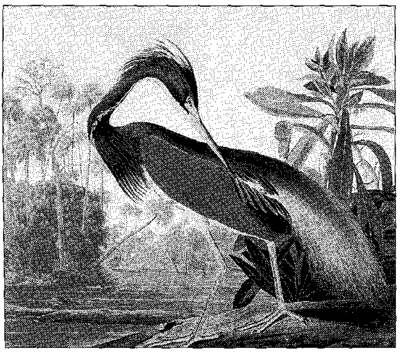

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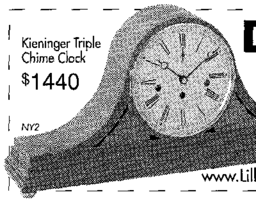

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States Senate is to me nothing short of criminal. I am sending a copy of this wire to the President of the United States.

To Edward Kennedy, age eight.

London
September 11, 1940

Dear Teddy:

I certainly don't get all of those letters you keep telling me you write to me and I should think you would make your plans to write me at least once a week, because your sisters do very well and you and Bobby are the worst correspondents I have in the family. In addition to that it is very good practice for you to write, so I hope that you will plan to send me a regular letter for as long as I am here. Incidentally I certainly was thrilled to hear all your voices on the radio. You are a great little cheerleader, and that Hip! Hip! Hooray! couldn't have been better.

I don't know whether you would have very much excitement during these raids. I am sure, of course, you wouldn't be scared, but if you heard all these guns firing every night and the bombs bursting you might get a little fidgety. I am sure you would have liked to be with me and seen the fires the German bombers started in London. It is really terrible to think about, and all those poor women and children and homeless people down in the East End of London all seeing their places destroyed. I hope when you grow up you will dedicate your life to trying to work out plans to make people happy instead of making them miserable, as war does today.

I was terribly sorry not to be with you in swimming at Cape Cod this summer, but I am sure you will know I wanted to be, but couldn't leave here while I had work to do. However, I am looking forward with great pleasure to our swims at Palm Beach this winter.

I know you will be glad to hear that all these little English boys your age are standing up to this bombing in great shape. They are all training to be great sports. . . .

Well, old boy, write me some letters and I want you to know that I miss seeing you a lot, for after all, you are my pal, aren't you?

To Robert Kennedy, age fourteen.

London
September 11, 1940

Dear Bobby:

I thought you might be interested to get my opinion as to the present situation here. There is no question but that there is a very definite feeling that within the next forty-eight or seventy-two hours Germany will try an invasion. There are evidences that they have accumulated a number of barges and ships to move their forces all along the French Coast. There is also an indication that their guns, which they are firing from the French Coast and the shells from which land in Dover, will be the sort of rainbow effect over the Channel that they will send their fleet under for protection. There is also evidence that the Germans are magnetic-mining all the harbors that the British naval forces might be in, so that they will have difficulty in getting out. So to all intents and purposes Hitler gives every indication of attempting to invade. However, there are some flies in that ointment. One is that everything that Hitler has done so far, aside from what he has told the world he proposes to do in his book "Mein Kampf," has never lacked an element of surprise, and his preparations for invasion seem so obvious that one hesitates to believe that this is his method. Of course, on the other hand, if he really plans an invasion, he will find it most difficult to hide ships in which he intends to move his troops in some dark alley, for the British reconnaissance 'planes are constantly looking for signs of any activity from the Germans. The second reason why one may doubt the possibility of invasion is that to date he has not been able to beat the R.A.F. fighters, as he would have to do, in order to feel sure that his ships could successfully close the Channel. Now it may be that he has a terrific air force ready to launch with his invasion plans, but this we will have to wait for and see.

Hitler's attacks on London and on the transportation systems here are naturally slowing up all the war effort, and it may be that he will concentrate on this in the next two or three days and nights in order to make it very difficult to move men and materials to various parts of this country. After all, London is the key to the whole place, and if they render this part helpless it will be a great boon for their prospective invasion. . . .

The whole problem will finally be dropped in the lap of the United States, because as the manufacturing facilities here are destroyed or disorganized, we in the United States will have to furnish more supplies, and that means that England

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will have to have more money, and they can't get more money unless we give it to them, so after the election we in the United States will be faced with the problem of how far we are willing to go in a financial way to help Great Britain. In other words, if we say, "We will help England," she probably will continue the struggle, but if we say, "This is hopeless," England must of necessity quit. So you see, within a very few months we will have the settling of the whole matter right in our own hands.

Well, I am terribly sorry I have not had a chance to see you this summer Bob, but I do hope you will put in a good effort this year. It is boys of your age who are going to find themselves in a very changed world and the only way you can hold up your end is to prepare your mind so that you will be able to accept each situation as it comes along, so don't, I beg of you, waste any time. Do all the things necessary to get yourself in good physical condition and work hard.

Joe Kennedy, Jr., and his co-pilot were killed on August 12, 1944, when the Liberator bomber drone they were flying—carrying twenty-two thousand pounds of explosives and headed for a German V-2 rocket-launching facility on the coast of Normandy—exploded shortly after takeoff. He was twenty-nine.

To Cissy Patterson, editor and publisher of the Washington Times-Herald.

Hyannis Port
November 26, 1945

My dear Cissy:

All the Kennedys have delegated me to answer your very sweet note to us. We have just finished a very happy Thanksgiving in that we had all the children back for Thanksgiving dinner. Of course, as you say, we miss Joe terribly.

It does seem ironical that somebody who opposed the war as bitterly as I did should lose his oldest son, his son-in-law, and have his second son badly banged up.

I still find it very difficult to get over Joe's death. God in His wisdom ordained so well that the young soon forget the sorrow of the death of older people, but I don't think that the older people ever get over the death of the younger ones.

At the minute it does seem that it is rather too much to hope for that the world will be any better as a result of the sacrifices of all these fine young men—

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but then again, I never thought it would be.

Kathleen is home and she will be in Washington next week. She is looking forward with great pleasure to seeing you. After all, she always feels a great sense of gratitude to you for having given her the opportunity of writing that column.

Jack has been making a number of speeches for the Community Chest Drive here and has been writing some book reviews for the local papers and also is doing some lectures on the European situation for charity.

I think it is extremely likely that he will run for Congress when Curley [James Michael Curley, then a Massachusetts congressman] gets through. With his background, brains, and his courage, he would do a good job if anybody could. I hope, for his peace of mind, that he does.

To Edward Kennedy, age thirteen.

Palm Beach
January 31, 1946

Dear Ted:

I am sending $50 up to the school with instructions to let you have what you need. Your letters are coming through all right, but your penmanship hasn't improved much.

You still spell "no" "know." Now know means if you understand something, but if someone says, "Are you going swimming?" and you say "no" it is "*no*"—not "*know.*" Skating is not "scating"; it is "*skating*," and tomorrow you spell wrong. You spell it "tommorow"; it is "*tomorrow.*" You spell "slaughter" as "slauter." It is "*slaughter.*" You really ought to do a little more work on the writing and the spelling. You are getting pretty old now, and it looks rather babyish. . . .

I am sorry to see that you are starving to death. I can't imagine that ever happening to you if there was anything at all to eat around, but then you can spare a few pounds. Margaret is sending some cookies.

Early on May 14, 1948, Kennedy was awakened in his hotel room in Paris by a telephone call from a Boston journalist who asked about his reaction to the news that the widowed twenty-eight-year-old Kathleen Kennedy Hartington, known as Kick, had been killed the previous afternoon with her intended second husband in a plane crash during a thunderstorm over the Cevennes Mountains, in southern France.

Hotel George V, Paris

To Kick:

No one who ever knew her didn't feel that life was much better that minute. And [the word "probably" with a slash mark through it] we know so little about the next world that we must think that they wanted just such a wonderful girl for themselves. We must not feel sorry for her but for ourselves.

(written by me 1/2 hr after notified of Kick's death)

To the Duchess of Devonshire, Kathleen's mother-in-law.

Hyannis Port
September 1, 1948

Dear Moucher:

It probably isn't news to you to know that I thought about you a great deal since I came back to America. I think that the only thing that helped me retain my sanity was your understanding manner in the whole sad affair. I would like to be able to tell you that I am very much better, but I just can't.

I can't seem to get out of my mind that there is no possibility of seeing Kick next winter and that there are no more weeks and months to be made gay by her presence. I realize that people say, "You have so many other children, you can't be too depressed by Kick's death," and I think that, to all intents and purposes, no one knows that I am depressed. In fact, I have never acknowledged it even to Rose who, by the way, is ten thousand per cent better than I am. Her terrifically strong faith has been a great help to her, along with her very strong will and determination not to give way. I am glad she has made up her mind to go to England to see you because, all during the summer, she said she would go to Paris but could not go to London.

To John B. Johnson, editor and publisher of the Watertown, Massachusetts, Daily Times.

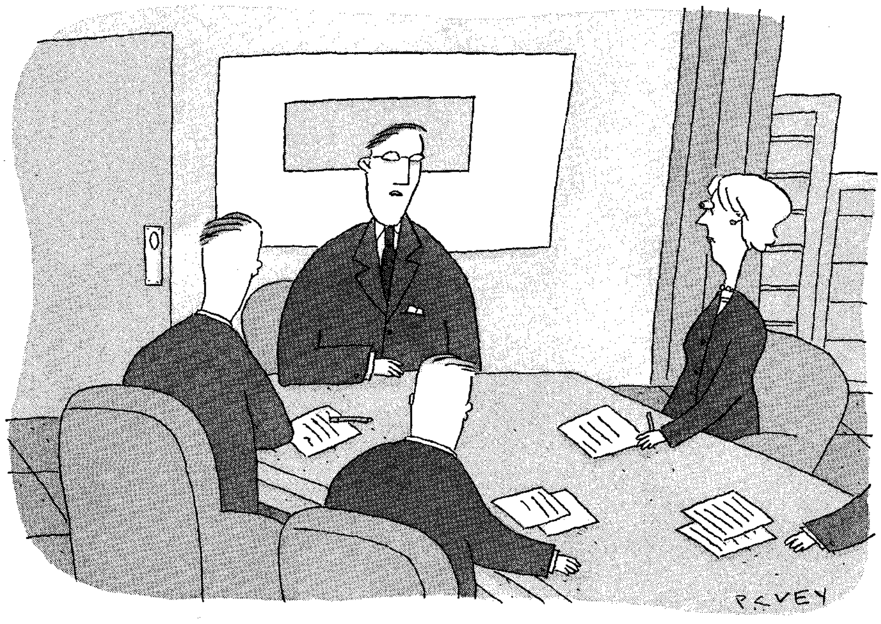
December 28, 1950

Dear Sir,

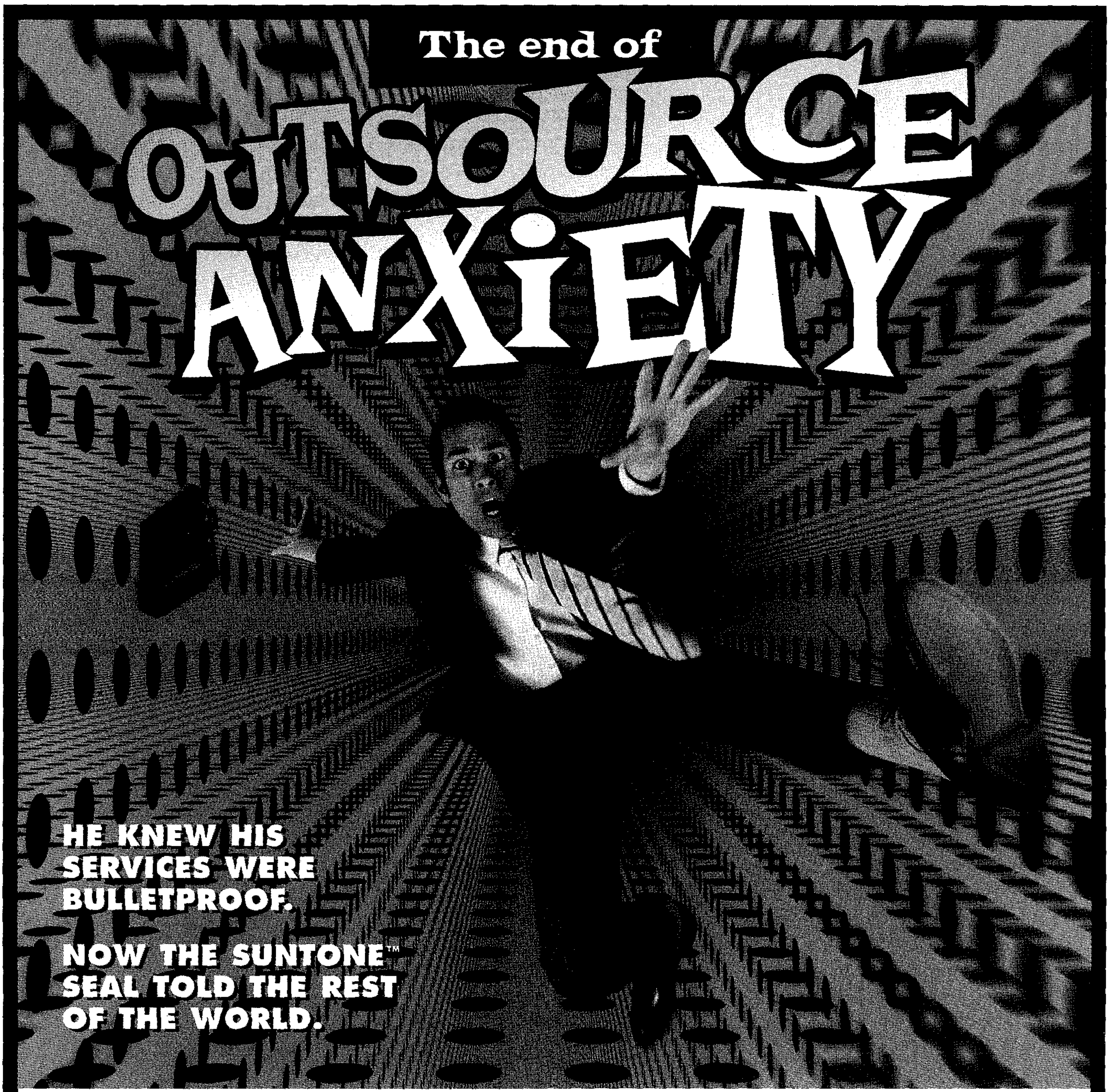
When I returned from Great Britain in 1940 and endorsed President Roosevelt for reelection on his platform of keeping this country out of war, I was subjected to a deliberate smear campaign by a few Washington columnists who so outrageously misinterpreted my views that, in January, 1941, I gave a nationwide broadcast to set the record straight.

Your editorial of December 13, 1950, repeats the old charges of the irresponsible columnists and ignores my answer, as well as my subsequent speeches, which are on public record.

You state that I believed in 1940 that Germany would defeat Great Britain. That statement is absolutely false. As I explained in my speech of January, 1941, a prediction can be based only on a complete knowledge of the strength and weaknesses of both sides. Without firsthand knowledge of German strength it would have been senseless to predict the final outcome of the war, nor did I at-



"Our stock just went up ten points on the rumor that I was replacing you all with burlap sacks stuffed with straw."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tempt to do so, although I, in company with others including Churchill, recognized the enormous difficulties facing Britain at that time.

You state that I was and am an unreconstructed pacificist ready to make any concession rather than war. That is also false. Then, as now, I said we should be prepared to defend our own shores against all aggressors, giving aid to any other nation willing to resist, but not to a point which would endanger our own protection.

As for my record as a prophet, I predicted that if we entered World War II Russia would become strong while the rest of the world approached exhaustion; that to prevent defeated Germany and the other countries from going completely Communistic would be our job; that we would have to reorganize these countries, probably standing guard while the reorganization was taking place; that such a task would create great internal problems for the United States and put impossible burdens on our grandchildren. I warned that our participation in the war would not destroy totalitarianism but would only leave the world in a worse condition than before.

To J. Edgar Hoover.

Hyannis Port
October 11, 1955

Dear Edgar:

I think I have become too cynical in my old age but the only two men that I know in public life today for whose opinion I give one continental both happen to be named Hoover—one John Edgar and one Herbert—and I am proud to think that both of them hold me in some esteem. I am all even on the rest.

I listened to Walter Winchell mention your name as a candidate for President. If that could come to pass, it would be the most wonderful thing for the United States, and whether you were on a Republican or Democratic ticket, I would guarantee you the largest contribution that you would ever get from anybody and the hardest work by either a Democrat or a Republican. I think the United States deserves you. I only hope it gets you.

To John F. Kennedy.

May 25, 1956

Dear Jack:

I have just finished talking with Clare Luce, who, by the way, is still quite sick. I think it would be nice if you sent her flowers. She is one of your greatest rooters. She hopes you will not accept the nomination for the Vice-Presidency. She has many arguments, not the least of which is that if you are chosen, it will be because you are a Catholic and not because you are big enough to do a good job. She feels that a defeat would be a devastating blow to your prestige, which at the moment is great, and non-partisan. She has many good arguments and many hopes for your future. I think definitely you should see her if you can, but if not, talk to her. She has some very, very interesting sidelights for you. I could write them, but I think you should hear them from her directly. This I assure you is very, very important.

To Edward Kennedy, age twenty-four.

July 18, 1956

Dear Ted:

Glad to hear everything is exciting but be careful.

You were accepted for Virginia Law School session to start September 14th. . . .

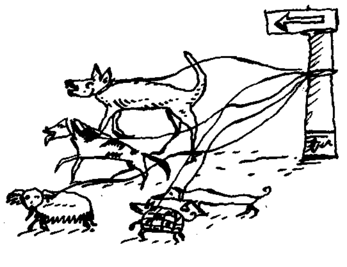
Talked to Jack twice. After conversation with Bill Blair [Governor Adlai Stevenson's former administrative assistant] on Cape on Sunday, he is giving serious consideration to the job. Last night, however, he was worried because the New York *Evening Post* was coming out with an article that said he had Addison's disease. I told him he should co-operate with the reporter and admit that he had it but that the disease was not a killer as it was eight years ago, and I feel that it should be brought out now and not after he gets the nomination, if he gets it. He thought he might come over for a week to talk things over, but I doubt it.

To Theodore Sorensen, a legislative aide and speechwriter for John F. Kennedy.

Palm Beach
February 24, 1960

Dear Ted:

I continually hear about Nixon's experience and I certainly think for the most part that experience is a term usually used to describe a lifetime of mistakes.



To Lord Beaverbrook.

Palm Beach
April 20, 1960

Dear Max:

We have a few troubles in West Virginia. Only about 3 per cent of the state is Catholic, probably the smallest percentage in the United States. And they are passing out religious leaflets up and down the line. The Baptists are the most bigoted group.

The Gallup Poll came out today and showed that Jack is pulling farther and farther ahead of all the other candidates; so that he will have a very good call on the nomination. If he is thrown out because he is a Catholic, I doubt very much if a Democrat will win.

If he gets the nomination, I do not imagine that I will see the Riviera this summer.

To Walter Trohan, the Washington bureau chief for the Chicago Tribune.

Hyannis Port
October 22, 1960

Dear Walter:

My blood pressure has gone up since receipt of your note of October 13. When NBC and *Newsweek* prophesy Kennedy's election, I remain rather calm, but when Walter Trohan of the Chicago *Tribune* does, I'm flying.

I haven't been seeing the *Tribune* for many a day, but Eunice reads it every day and manages to keep calmer than she does when she reads the *Sun-Times*, on the theory that you expect the *Tribune* to be very pro-Republican, but the *Sun-Times* is rather like a Sunday school teacher being caught in a brothel raid.

I don't think there is really as much reason to be disturbed as a lot of people think there is about Jack's financial policies. Republicans for the most part have always been leery of any Democrat who is President. But, Walter, you and I remember that after the closing of the banks in '33, the bankers were begging Roosevelt to take them over, and it was Roosevelt who told them to hold their horses and continue as a private enterprise. . . .

Don't be too tough on us the next two weeks, because you know and I know the country would be a damn sight better off with Kennedy than it would be with Nixon.

On December 19, 1961, Kennedy suffered a debilitating stroke, from which he never recovered. He died on November 18, 1969. ♦

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LETTER FROM TEXAS

A PLACE CALLED MIDLAND

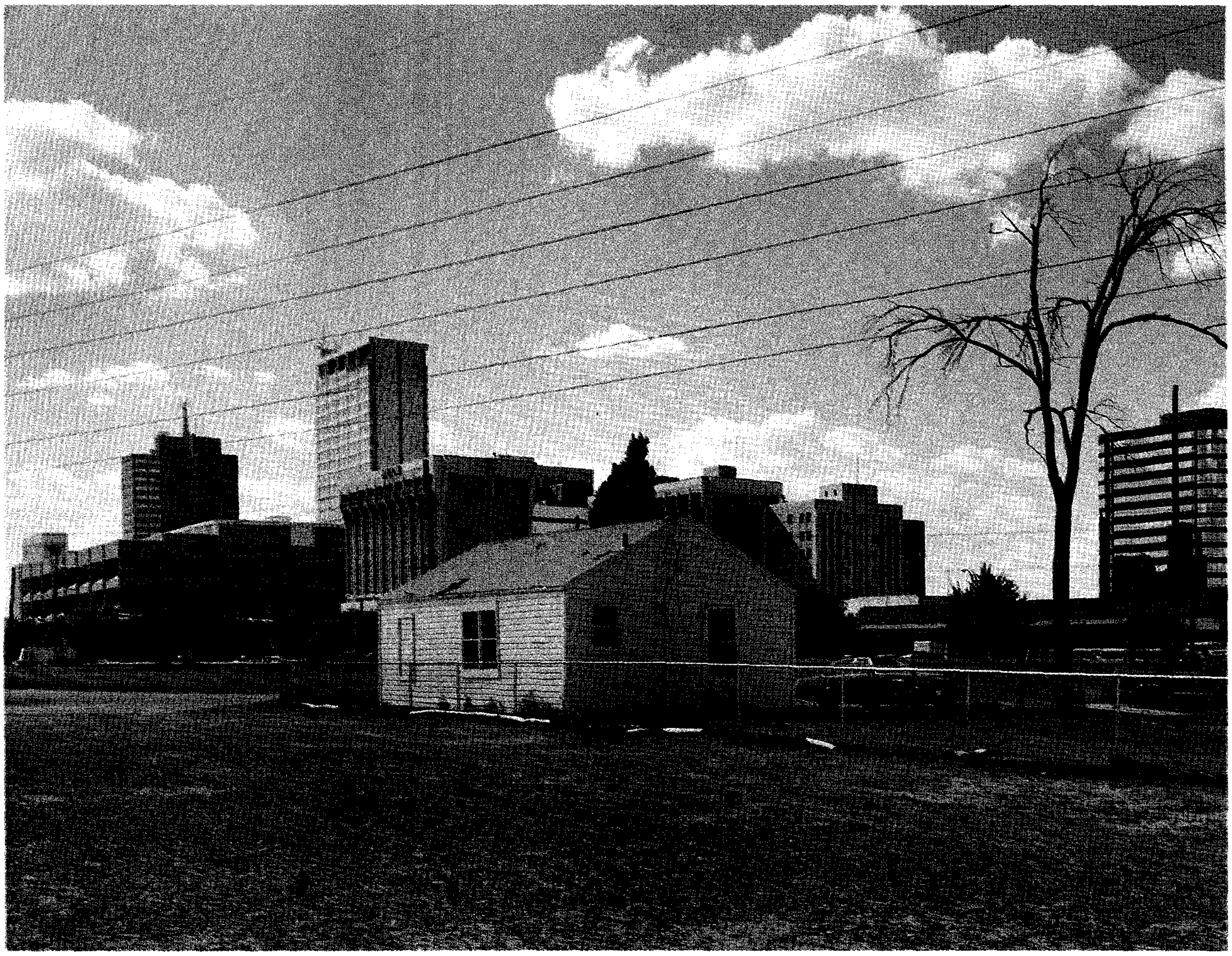
George W. Bush's home town isn't what you think it is.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

In Midland, Texas, it's not the heat; it's the lack of humidity. Almost total lack of it, or so it seems, especially when you first arrive and step out of the chilled Midland International Airport and into the dry-roasted air. Midland has the kind of air that hits you like a brick. After a few minutes, your throat burns. After a few days, your skin feels powdery, your eyelids stick, your hair feels dusty and rough. The longer you spend there, the more you become a little bit like the land—you dry out and cake and crack. Not until I spent time in Midland did I fully appreciate the fact that the earth has an actual crust, like bread that has been slowly baked. I became convinced that if I stayed for a while I would develop one, too.

Midland is a city of ninety-nine thousand, in the middle of the region known as the Permian Basin, a platform of sediment and salt capped with a wedge of rock which covers roughly a hundred and twenty-five thousand square miles of West Texas. Most people, if they know about Midland at all, know that it is where Baby Jessica McClure was rescued from a well thirteen years ago, and where George W. Bush grew up and later started his business career. ("I don't know what percentage of me is Midland," he once said in an interview, "but I would say people, if they want to understand me, need to understand Midland and the attitude of Midland.") Both associations suggest a city that is innocent, idyllic, congenial—the kind of place where people fish fallen babies out of wells and young men make fortunes in old-fashioned ways. But Midland struck me as weirder than that—its simplicity deceiving, its character harder to uncover and know.

Being inconspicuous is Midland's most conspicuous feature. It used to be called Midway, because it was halfway between Fort Worth and El Paso. When it was determined that there was already a Midway in Texas, it was renamed Midland, as if nothing else about it could inspire a name. A current city slogan is "Midland: In the Middle of Somewhere." Previous slogans have included "Midland: Most Ambitious City



The only time that matters in Midland is oil time. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

Between the Oceans" and "Midland: Oil, Livestock, and Financial Center of the Permian Basin." Recently, the more buoyant seventies slogan "The Sky's the Limit" has been revived, since Bush has said that it embodies the Midland he knew.

Originally, Midland was a depot on the Texas & Pacific Railway. It outlived and outgrew the other flyspeck towns in the basin—now vanished cotton and cattle outposts like Boone and Slaughter and Toad Loop and Fighting Hollow and Bounce—by wooing oil companies to locate there after the first West Texas gusher, the Santa Rita, was tapped, in 1923. In the late twenties, a hopeful businessman built an ornate office tower to enhance Midland's prestige and named it the Petroleum Building. And in the thirties houses were literally picked up and moved from the neighboring town of McCamey to Midland in order to attract employees of Humble Oil. By the mid-fifties, Midland was where the oil-company engineers, geologists, leaseholders, and attorneys lived; its sister city, Odessa, was home to the tool-pushers and roughnecks.

The only measure of time that really matters in Midland is oil time. Recent history is divided into two periods. There was the mid-seventies through the early eighties, when OPEC was controlling the market and crude went up to an unimaginably high thirty-five dollars a barrel and was expected to go as high as a hundred: a Rolls-Royce dealership opened in town; Midland Airpark had a waiting list for private hangars; and powerboats were beached in nearly every driveway. And then there was 1986, and the years after that, when OPEC flooded the market, the price per barrel dropped to nine dollars, and the F.D.I.C. became the biggest employer in the county.

A popular local joke is to say that the city is in the middle of the finest fishing and hunting in the Southwest. The first person to try the joke on me was an engineer named Richard Witte. Like everyone else I met, he warned me that I'd never see the real Midland on my own and he offered to show me around. We took his pickup and rode out of the city on razor-straight roads to the oil fields—an ocean of gray dirt, unmarked, parched, spectacularly monotonous, not a ripple in it except for the occasional sunken spot of a former buffalo wallow, until you get to the edge of the Permian Basin caprock and fall off into the rest of the world. We skirted ranches on which little sprouted except for shrubby mesquite and rows of skeletal pump jacks bobbing for oil, and zigzagged across square miles so wide and empty that, even when we raced along, we seemed to be standing still. It looked like nothing, except that there were millions of dollars underneath us, sacks of money banked in stone.

Witte then took me to see the Clay-Desta Center, an office building with a fountain of silvery water and a life-size sculpture of a mother and baby giraffe in its atrium. It was a beastly day, and the gurgling sound of the water was so pleasant that we lingered for a bit; Witte said that people often came to the Clay-Desta Center just to be near the fountain. The idea of going to an office building to be near water seemed so peculiar that I asked whether there was a more natural source around. "Sure there is," Witte said. "In fact, we're in the middle of the finest fishing and hunting in the whole Southwest." Once Witte was satisfied by the look of shock on my face, he grinned. "Drive five hours in any direction and you'll find great fishing and hunting and boating," he said. "We're right in the middle of it. It's just that none of it's here." The second time I heard the joke—from a real-estate broker, as I recall—I pretended to fall for it out of politeness; the third time someone—a lawyer—tried it on me, I delivered the punch line myself.

The first day I was in Midland, I stopped in an antique store to see what passed for an antique in West Texas, which had pretty much been unpopulated until the nineteen-twenties. I dug through old copies of *Sunset* magazine and empty Avon perfume bottles while the only other customer, a heavy, red-faced woman, talked to the store clerk. "The President made a lot of people mad," the customer was saying, and I turned to listen.

"A lot of Presidents do," the clerk replied.

"Well, he shouldn't have been in a convertible," the customer went on. "That was a big mistake. But, O.K., let's forget about the convertible, even. My feeling is that J.F.K. was a goner no matter what."

I had come to Midland expecting that

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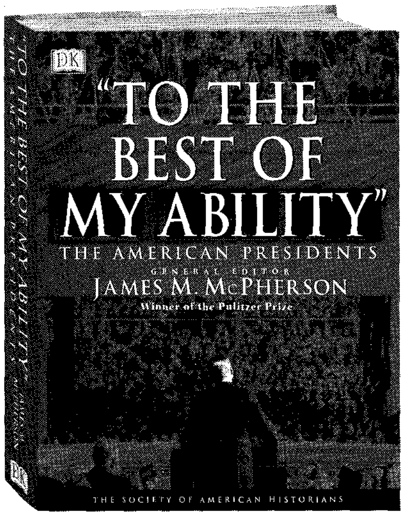
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everyone would be talking about the Presidential campaign, but it was the dead of summer and little was stirring; there were no local discussions of whether Midland might become the next Hope, Arkansas, or whether there would be house tours of Bush's former residences. It wasn't for lack of partisanship: another local joke is to say that you can name more than ten Democrats in town. It was just that the Bush candidacy seemed predestined and expected, a natural ascendancy. While I was in Midland, the big news stories were that one of the longest horizontal wells ever drilled in the area had been completed, reaching from its starting point, near Interstate 20, to a spot twelve thousand feet below the Midland K mart; that the Midland RockHounds had beat the Tulsa Drillers, 4–3, putting them back at the .500 mark for the season; and that oil prices were creeping up to thirty dollars a barrel.

Midland is such a small city and the Bushes are so woven into it that most people seem to have had some contact with them—lived down the street from them, or belonged to the same country club, or known Laura Bush when she was a girl. The Bush family first moved to Midland in 1950, when a lot of East Coast entrepreneurs were coming to Texas and looking for oil. It was a great moment to be punching holes in the Permian Basin: within nine years, George H. W. Bush had made his fortune and moved the family to Houston. In the mid-seventies, when George W. Bush came back to Midland and founded Arbusto Oil, it was still a good time to be in the business. But only half of Arbusto's wells hit oil or gas; eventually, the company faltered and merged with another dying company, which was then bought out by Harken Energy, and Bush moved to Washington D.C. Virtually every oilman I met remembered George W. from his Arbusto days. The comment I heard from most of them was, "George W. was the nicest young man you ever will meet. Just the nicest. But, you know, he never did earn a dime."

I was hot the whole time I was in Midland and dying to see anything green. When I could bear the heat, I walked around the deserted downtown, or through the neighborhood called Old Town Midland, or to the Permian Basin Petroleum Museum, Library, and Hall of Fame, over by the interstate. Everything seemed bleached and lifeless. Then, one afternoon, I drove out to the Racquet Club—which used to have George W. Bush as a member—to attend a party hosted by a local mortgage company. The clubhouse was cool and whitewashed, the lawns were silken and lush, and when the kids did cannonballs into the swimming pool the water roared like applause. All the other guests at the party were in real estate, and they gathered in the shade of a live-oak tree, snacking on hors d'oeuvres and chatting about the annual performance of Summer Mummers, the local vaudeville troupe, and about the upcoming season of high-school football, which is by far the biggest sport around.

It is a pretty nice time to be a real-estate broker in Midland. It is not as nice as it was in, say, 1980, when you could show people only two or three houses and know they would snap one up at any price. "This was not the real world back then," Kay Sutton, who owns Century 21 in Midland, explained to me. "My daughter would shop and have lunch at the country club, and she didn't know that there was any other way people lived." Back then, so many new houses were going up that contractors were brought in from all over the country and had to camp out in R.V.s and tents.

These days are middling; still, the agents were feeling easy and the mortgage company was flush enough to have ordered shrimp. "It's the high price of oil," Kay Sutton said. "It makes people optimistic." When people are extremely optimistic, they want to live in a fancy development like Saddle Club North or Green Tree Country Club Estates, with maybe an attached three- or four-car garage and a view of the golf course. The best houses have swimming pools and lawns that are as soft as lamb's wool—real luxury in a place where a gallon of drinking water can cost more than a gallon of gas. "Of course, everyone dreams of mature trees," Kay Sutton said. "But it's just a dream. You can't have both a new house and mature trees."

Right next to my hotel was a café called the Ground Floor, the unofficial clubhouse of a different Midland. The Ground Floor was opened in 1996 by a real-estate investor from Seattle named John Nute; he put in free Internet access, sponsored live music and poetry readings, and made the restrooms available to anyone who walked in the door. The Ground Floor is across the street from Centennial Plaza, one of those sterile brick-and-concrete urban parks, and, once the café opened, the two places quickly filled with kids. "A lot of us misfits sort of found each other by hanging out at Centennial Plaza and the Ground Floor," a seventeen-year-old named Barbara Lawhon explained to me one afternoon. "We'd sit around writing poetry and playing music. It was a really big deal."

By 1997, Nute says, Friday-night crowds at Centennial Plaza had grown to two hundred teen-agers. Some of them were skateboarders and rollerbladers, who began doing a move on the park benches called grinding, which tears the benches to shreds. By the next summer, a city ordinance forbidding skateboarding and rollerblading in Centennial Plaza was being strongly enforced, and Nute's business dropped off by more than two-thirds.

The year before the ordinance was enforced was one of the only times Barbara liked living in Midland. "Growing up here sort of sucked for me," she explained. "We were basically poor. Midland is all about money. All the rich kids get into upper-level classes, even though they can't spell. In the first day of honors English in eighth grade, our teacher made us stand up and say our names and why we wanted to be in an honors class, and then say what our parents did for a living. And your parents' occupation is listed on the roster for band and for some of the other clubs, too. It's gross." In Midland, the nickname for spoiled preppies is "white hats," because of the fashion for wearing white painter hats with college logos. I told her I'd gone to the Midland Park Mall earlier in the week and had overheard a young guy in a white hat talking to two girls who were working at The Athlete's Foot. "Midland has a lot, a lot, of money," the young guy was saying, as the girls nodded enthusiastically. "There are more Mercedeses here than anywhere in the country. In other places, when kids get

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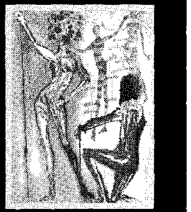

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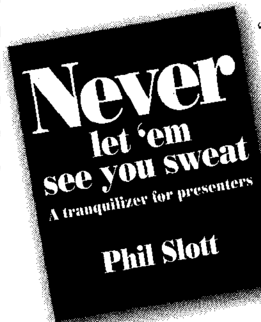

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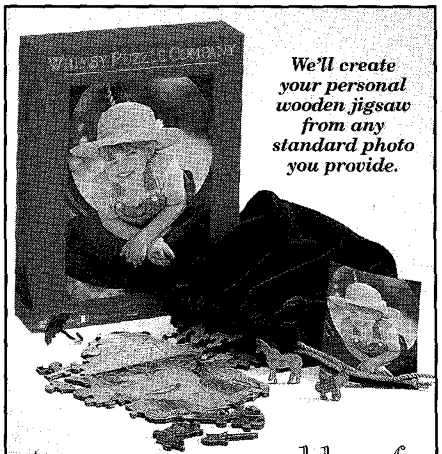

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cars it's something like, you know, a Toyota."

"There are all these rich kids here," Barbara said. "They're doing coke, drinking, partying. They're totally into football and cheerleading and into trashing cars—just trashing them, for no reason. Everything here is about being trendy. There's even a trendy church, Kelview Heights Baptist Church, which is trendy because the pastor is on TV." Barbara said that her mother was a housecleaner. For a while, she had worked at a private club in the Clay-Desta Center and she told Barbara that many of the younger rich men who were members behaved in a disgusting way. I was lucky to have met Barbara at all, because it turned out that she was planning to move to Austin in a couple of days, and she thought she would be a lot happier there. "It'd be great to live in Midland if you were rich," she said.

After a few minutes, Barbara and I were joined by Midge Erskine, one of the few environmental activists in town. Midge is an elegant, silver-haired woman who grew up in the East but came to Midland thirty years ago with her husband, a geologist. In the late seventies, she became unpopular with local oil companies when she protested their practices of dumping contaminated water and keeping their oil tanks uncovered—both of which killed thousands of birds and other wildlife. Recently, Midge began videotaping city-council meetings and set up a Web site, Truthmidlandtx.com, raising questions about local power. In general, the café seemed to be the place where people's dark suspicions about their home town surfaced: Why was the Midland Airpark, which has no control tower, still operating? Who was so eager to come in and out of Midland sight unseen? Were police reporting the real crime statistics? How did So-and-So get his money, make his deals, and avoid getting busted? But, if the Ground Floor is the meeting place for Midland's local hippies, poets, folksingers, and Democrats, there may not be enough of them to keep it afloat; these days, the establishment is barely breaking even. Nute blames the city, for having scared away teen-agers, and the economy, for having failed to bring a spark back to the city's downtown. To keep the café going, he was forced to liquidate his investments, and now he has lost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

I went to Midland expecting to find an ordinary small city, but nothing about it was ordinary: not its weather or its topography or its history or its economy. People in Midland take in huge amounts of money, they lose huge amounts of money—then they move on to the next day. It's a manic-depressive city, spending lavishly and then desperately suffering. One afternoon, I was out with Richard Witte, looking at the fanciest neighborhoods in town. "Here's a fella who lost millions," he said, passing one sprawling Italianate ranch. "And see that house over there?" He pointed to a white-brick confection with skylights and Palladian windows. "They lost all their money, had to sell every single piece of furniture, the TV, everything. You drive past these houses and you see a big, expensive home, but you don't know how the people might be living inside."

There's a saying in Midland that whenever you strike oil you go out and get a boat, a plane, and a mistress, and when you lose your money you get rid of them one by one, starting with the mistress. No one mentioned anything to me about mistresses, but several people I met in Midland had been forced to sell their boats and planes. No one seemed ashamed about having lost money: it was like catching a cold—common and widespread and out of your control. According to Texas law, it used to be slanderous to say someone was bankrupt, but then, in the late eighties, it became part of the vernacular, so the law was changed. One day, I was talking to a local lawyer, Warren Heagy, who himself had owned and then had to sell a couple of planes. On

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the way out of his office, he introduced me to a colleague, who said, "I don't understand all these Internet people whining about losing money. My husband and I lost seven million dollars and you don't see us in the newspaper complaining!"

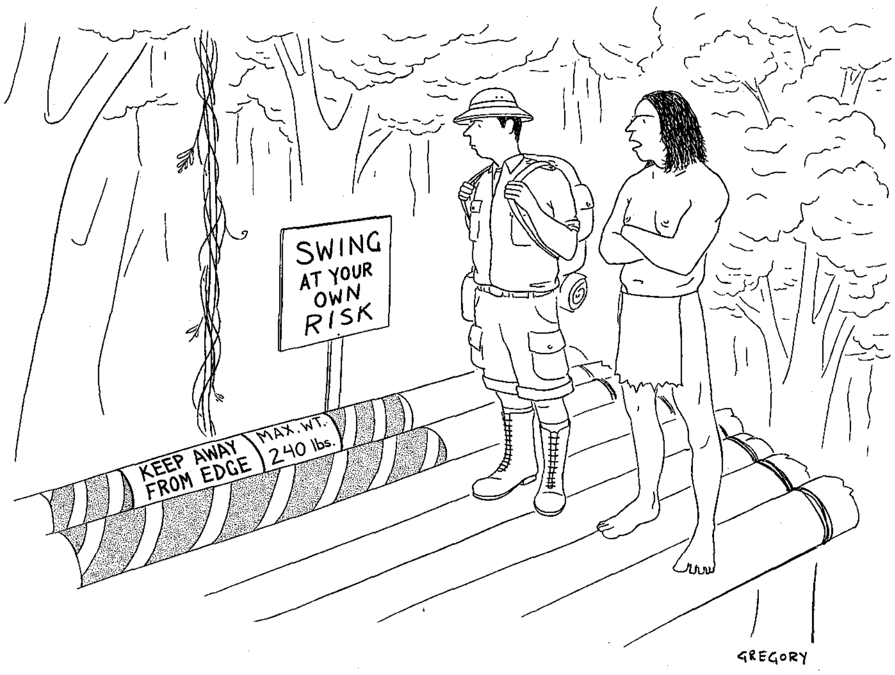
Now oil prices are cresting again, but the buzz that always follows—"Like being near a beehive on a spring day," Richard Witte says—is missing. There are still thirteen pages of oil listings in the Yellow Pages—Oil Marketers, Oil Well Casing Pullings, Oil Well Log Libraries, Oil Refiners, Oil & Gas Lawyers—and there is still a special oil-and-gas section in the newspaper every week, and every day I saw pickup trucks downtown with pieces of pump riggings bouncing around in the back. But the bust in 1986 was something no one had ever seen before, and Midland has not been the same since. When oil prices dropped from twenty-seven dollars to nine dollars a barrel, as many as seventy-five per cent of the rigs were shut down, and roughly ten thousand people left Midland and never returned. Mobil, Texaco, Chevron, Conoco, and other companies scaled back their Midland operations and consolidated elsewhere, taking hundreds of administrative and executive jobs out of town.

More important, there is little exploration left to do in the Permian Basin. Most of the entrepreneurial gamble is gone: all you can do these days is work on how to draw every last drop of oil out of the ground. Some scientists speculate that in the next half-century or so the Permian Basin will actually run out of oil and gas. The phrase "economic diversification"—probably unheard of in town twenty years ago—was on the front page of the Midland *Reporter-Telegram* nearly every day I was in Texas. Midland may not become one of those forgotten towns that popped up on the caprock, never took hold, and then simply vanished, as if a high dry wind had blown it away, but these days the city is trying to market itself as a retirement haven and a convention site, just in case.

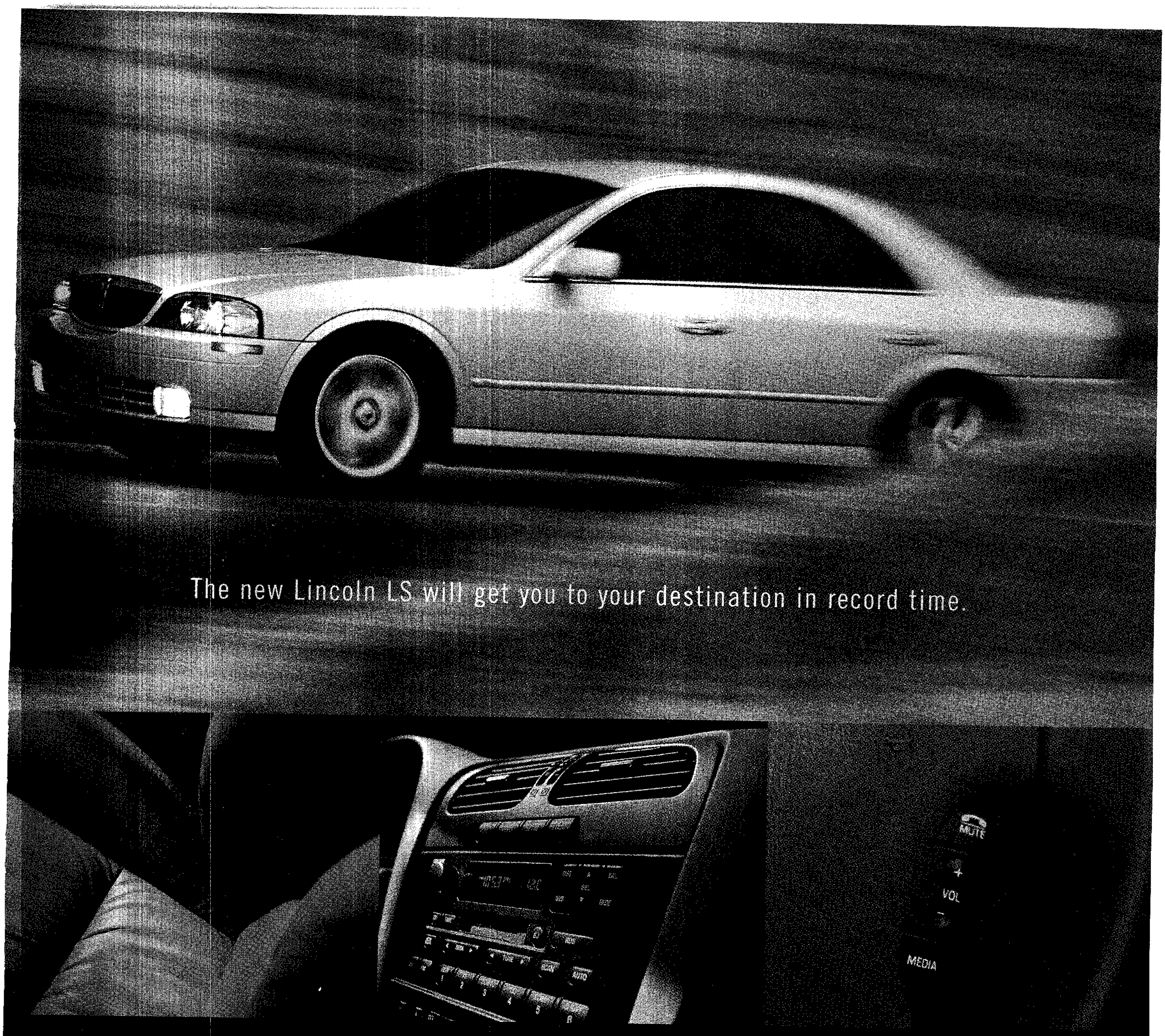
It's not hard to imagine that in Midland you are seeing the end of something. The pump jacks dipping up and down in the distance look prehistoric, and the hot wind bangs on the empty windows of the now defunct Midlander Athletic Club and the long-gone Rockin' Rodeo. You even sense it in the Petroleum Club, an exclusive organization that caters to local oil executives. It must have been a great place to make an entrance in the days when oil was big and Big Oil was invincible: the club has an enormous open staircase, and when you walk up to the dining room you feel as if you were rising to the top of the world. The day I visited, though, the club was a little vacant; the empty stairway seemed to stretch forever, and half the dining room had been sectioned off and filled with artificial palm trees. It was my last day in Midland: I was having lunch with John Paul Pitts, the oil-and-gas editor at the *Reporter-Telegram*, and he seemed to know everyone in the room. This one had been worth millions, and that one worth billions, and that one was the founder or the president of this or that oil concern. But the dining room was subdued, and many of the fellow-diners who walked by were ancient, skinny men wearing string ties.

The Petroleum Club has always been for the money people in the oil business, and the money people have almost always been white. Early on, even the oil-field workers were white, but, after 1986, many of them left Midland or left the industry, and in the last fifteen years or so a majority of the people digging and servicing and repairing the rigs have been Hispanic. The population of Midland has changed as well: now only sixty-five per cent of the residents are white, and nearly all the rest are Hispanic. There are very few Hispanics at the upper reaches of the oil industry—and few Hispanic geologists or engineers—and none were in evidence in the quiet dining room at the Petroleum Club. Pitts said that he expects the next generation of Hispanics in the business to end up in the offices downtown, rather than out on the oil patch; and some Midlanders believe that in twenty years the city may be mostly Hispanic. The question is how much longer there will be oil for them to tap.

George W. Bush has said that he would like to be buried in Midland. This will not necessarily be easy to do. When you first see it, the soil here looks loose and crumbly, and you'd think digging a hole in it would be as easy as sticking a knife in a cake. But nothing in Midland, not even burial, is as simple as it first seems. The tender soil conceals a calcium deposit called caliche which is as thick and hard as bone, and it takes a tempered-steel drill bit to break through. ♦



"Tarzan hate frivolous lawsuits."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THE INSIDE GAME

How Charlie Rangel learned to handle the House.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

If the Democrats take the House, Rangel, who has represented Harlem for thirty years, will have one of the most powerful jobs in Congress. Photograph by Harry Benson.

Not long ago, a dozen former members of the all-black 503rd Field Artillery Battalion were having drinks and canapés in a small function room in the basement of the Rayburn House Office Building. They had come to Washington, some from as far away as Texas and California, to commemorate the outbreak of the Korean War, fifty years before, and that afternoon they had taken a bus to Arlington to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The next morning, they were due to leave for Seoul from Andrews Air Force Base, wheels up at 8 A.M. Most of the men were in their seventies, and it had been a long day, so after a few drinks they gravitated toward some folding chairs set up along the walls.

Congressman Charles Rangel, the party's host, arrived late. He had served with the 503rd in Korea, first as a corporal and then as a sergeant. In November of 1950, when the Chinese crossed the Yalu River and surprised the Americans with a devastating counterattack, Rangel was wounded near Kunu-ri. Nevertheless, he led a group of several dozen men through the frozen hills to safety, and for his valor in that disastrous campaign he was awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. After making a few remarks to the group, Rangel introduced a Cabinet official from the Office of Veterans Affairs, who

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presented everyone with a special lapel pin, and then he joined the other men telling war stories at the edge of the room.

It was hard for an outsider to follow much of the conversation, which turned on events that had occurred half a century and half a world away. Still, it seemed pretty clear what kind of history the group in general, and Rangel in particular, was constructing. " 'You can walk along with that clipboard, but you're going to get your ass shot off,' " Rangel said at one point, mimicking the words of a commander of his. At another point, I heard him say, to much hilarity, "I crossed the same goddam river three times. People thought I knew what I was doing."

By the conventions of American politics, Rangel's life has been an exemplary one. Not just the decorated service in Korea but the poor childhood on Lenox Avenue, the struggle to get through college, the succession of odd jobs during law school—all would fit effortlessly into a story about grit and hope that is also, perforce, a story about a nation of opportunity. Yet something prevents Rangel from telling it that way.

When he and the other members of the 503rd returned from their trip, I tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to extract from him a clearer account of his contribution to the war effort. "This crew that I went to Korea with reminded me that they never really knew what my job was," he told me, giving a deep, raspy laugh. " 'How the hell did *he* make corporal? All he does is walk around with a clipboard!' " As for his heroism, Rangel dismissed it as a case of the blind leading the blind; he had struck out, for no particular reason, in one direction, and forty-three soldiers had fallen in behind him.

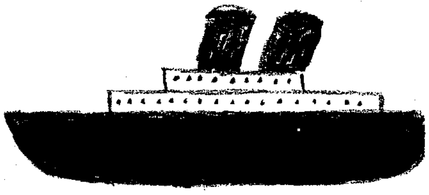
Rangel, who is seventy, is a heavy man with a large, almost rectangular face, a small mustache, and eyebrows of operatic proportions. His voice, when he is telling stories, is gravelly almost to the point of parody. Rangel has represented Harlem for three decades, and during that time he has suffered his fair share of defeats, but he describes his career as virtually free of disappointment. "I swear I've never had a bad day," he told me. "Never had a setback that I couldn't deal with, in saying, 'You lucky son of a bitch.' "

Next month, if the Democrats regain control of the House, Rangel will become the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. If that happens, he will be the highest-ranking African-American in congressional history. The chairmanship could be seen as one last spectacularly lucky break for Rangel—the perfect ending to his picaresque tale. Or it could be seen as proof of just how far, even in politics, a gift for the picaresque can take you.

On the morning of the second day of the Democratic National Convention, in Los Angeles, I found myself wandering with Rangel through a men's-clothing store in Santa Monica. That evening, he was to give a three-minute speech on the floor, just inside prime time. A rehearsal of his remarks, which had been scheduled for the previous night, had never taken place, even though Rangel had waited around the Convention Center nearly forty-five minutes for it, and now he was on his way downtown to try again. When he spotted a mall, he announced that he wanted to treat himself to a new shirt.

Rangel is a snappy dresser—the only time I ever heard him criticize Al Gore was when the Vice-President showed up at an environmental event in rumpled clothes—and on this particular day he had on a dark-blue suit, a sky-blue shirt, and a maroon-striped tie with a matching handkerchief, as well as two large rings and a heavy gold-link chain bracelet. The first thing Rangel did when he got into the store was ask what was on sale. "If the price is right, I'll wear the label on prime time," he announced. He picked out a dress shirt with a white-on-white herringbone pattern and a gold tie-and-handkerchief set. Something that one of the clerks said to him about sleeve length prompted him to tell a long joke that involved hunching his shoulders and limping around the store, the punch line of which was "Yeah, but that suit sure fits great!" Upon being told that the shirt was sixty-nine dollars—knocked down, especially for him, from eighty-nine—and the tie set forty-nine, he put back the tie set.

After Rangel had paid for his purchase—in cash—he went to look around the atrium of the mall. Several shoppers recognized him and came over to wish him well. He greeted each one with an expression of surprised pleasure. "He's the reason I'm a Democrat," one man told me. "He's always speaking up for a good cause." Rangel noticed a stand that sold smoothies, and decided that he wanted one. I said I would treat, and he told me that he thought I should get a drink for his driver as well, a gesture that from many other politicians would have seemed almost too solicitous.



At roughly the time that Rangel was pricing shirts in Santa Monica, several hundred black delegates were meeting a few miles away with Senator Joseph Lieberman at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel. Two days earlier, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, of Los Angeles, had declared that because of Lieberman's stand on affirmative action she might not be able to back the Democratic ticket, and the day after that a meeting of the black caucus of the Democratic National Committee had been suspended when it seemed about to be overtaken by the issue. The controversy was getting a lot of news coverage, including a front-page story in the special Convention issue of the Washington *Post.*

When it suits him, Rangel is as apt to make trouble as the next guy, but in Los Angeles this clearly wasn't what he had in mind. Several times I heard reporters try to prod him into saying something controversial, only to be met with a definitive, Rangelian brushoff: "Your question is far too sophisticated for me" or "That's above my pay grade." Rangel obviously knew about the meeting with Lieberman—I had heard him mention it in the car—and just as obviously had decided to be somewhere else when it happened. As soon as he arrived at the Convention Center, reporters tried to get him to take a position on what they clearly hoped was a widening racial conflict; in a tone of regret, he told them he couldn't help them, since he hadn't been at the meeting.

Later, after Rangel had run through his speech and repaired to a sky box high above the Convention floor, I asked him about the issue, hoping that in a quiet moment I might have more luck. He responded with a comic parable. During a national Party Convention once, he and a number of other African-American delegates had had some by now forgotten

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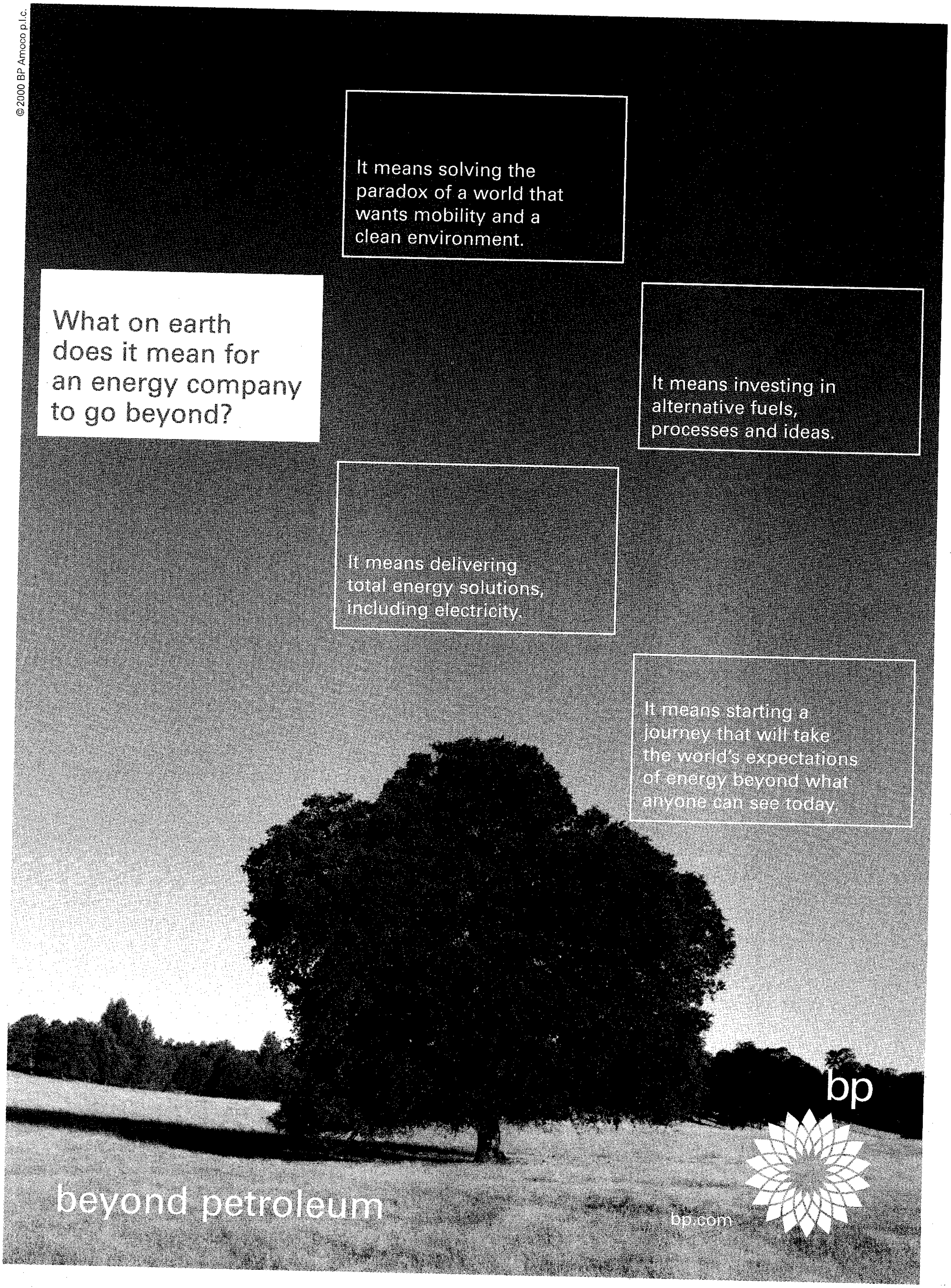

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"I'll call you back. I'm harvesting rice."

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grievance, and they had threatened the Party chairman that they were going to walk out over it. "No, you won't," the chairman had told him. "Because we're going to provide you with *bicycles*."

"I would think Lieberman's going to have bigger problems with me than I'll have with him," Rangel said by way of conclusion. Then he lay down on a couch and took a nap.

Under the United States Constitution, "all Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives," and before the House can vote on them they have to go through Ways and Means. The committee's jurisdiction extends from the tax code through trade policy to Social Security and Medicare. Its work is thus at once technically demanding, tortuously dull, and extremely consequential.

One day this spring, I sat in on a Ways and Means markup of a Medicare prescription-drug bill, H.R. 4680. The markup took place in the committee's Longworth Building meeting room, which is very large and very formal, with a round recess in the ceiling and a fierce-looking eagle perched in each corner. Virtually everything that was to occur during the session could have been predicted in advance, having been orchestrated by the Democratic and Republican House leaders to inflict maximum damage on one another. Nevertheless, the room, which can easily hold several hundred people, was full. Most of the first hour was taken up with a read-through of the proposed bill: "Section 307 on page thirty-three would phase in a new risk adjustment method based on data from all settings gradually in ten years in one-tenth increments starting in 2004." Rangel left in the midst of this exercise to attend to other business, and I followed him, but some six hours later I was told that the meeting was still, excruciatingly, grinding on.

When Rangel was named to Ways and Means, in 1975, he was the first black person ever to serve on the committee. He pushed hard for the assignment, and he finally got it, he intimated to me, by supporting the 1974 New York gubernatorial candidacy of Congressman Hugh Carey, a Ways and Means committee member. Given the concerns of Harlem, one might have expected Rangel to seek a seat on the budget or the appropriations committee, where he would have been in a position to funnel aid directly to his district. But Rangel is keenly sensitive to the power that comes from having something that someone else wants.

"When you represent a poor community, and you're looking in the long range, you have to be in a bargaining position with those who have an entirely different agenda," he told me once. "There's not a tax bill that poor and working people don't come out ahead on because of my efforts. It's not because I'm that good—it's just because other people want so many other things that I can say, 'Hey, hold it. Stop the parade!' "

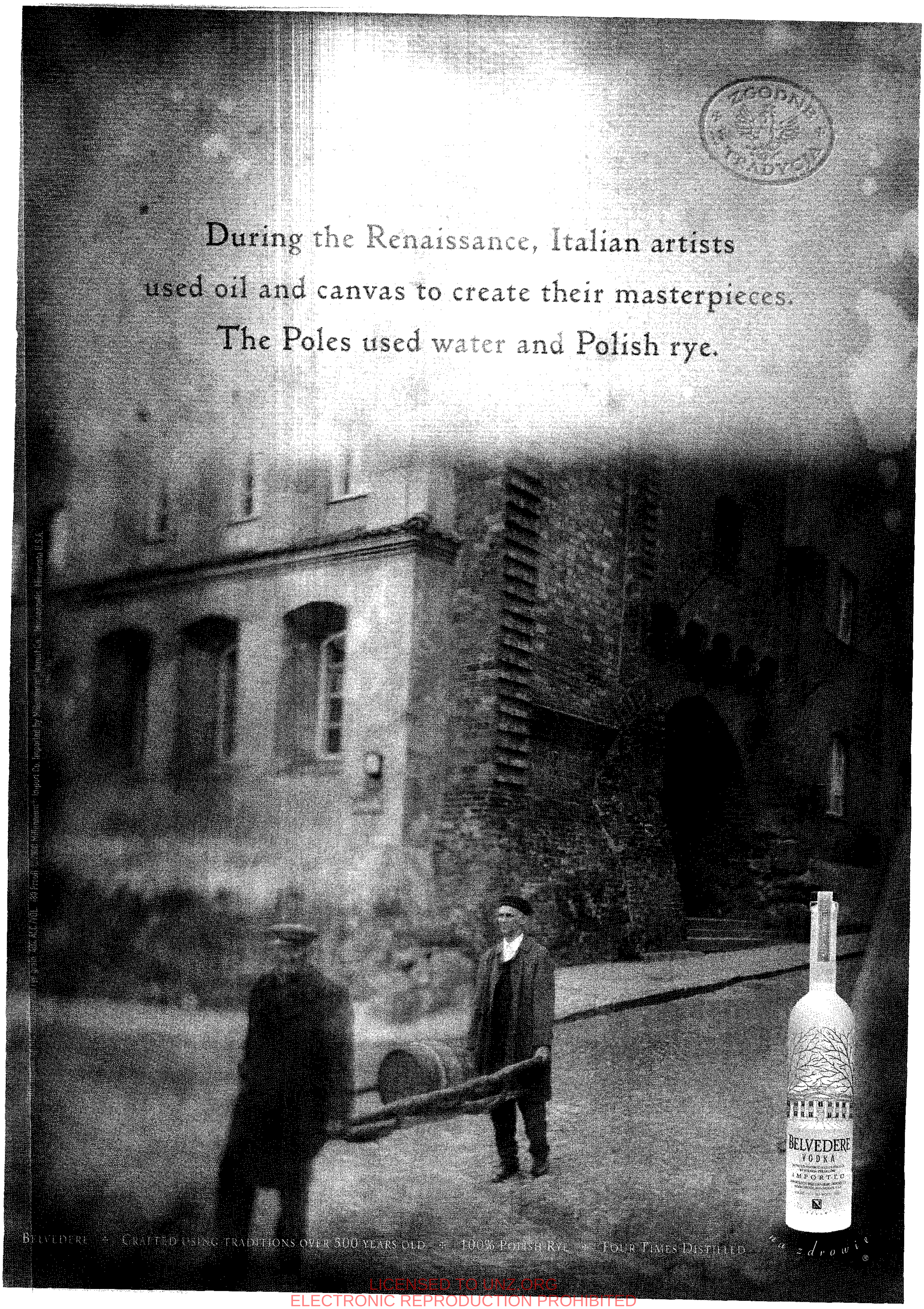
Rangel is the kind of politician who earns ratings of a hundred per cent from the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and zero per cent from the American Conservative Union. He favors expanding federal aid for education, and training, and housing, and drug treatment, and he vigorously opposed the welfare-reform act of 1996. Most of his major legislative accomplishments involve using the tax laws to encourage the rich to help the poor, and his minor ones generally involve using the tax laws to help New York City. "Charlie has used his position consistently to tweak every piece of legislation that went by him," Kathryn Wylde, the president of the New York City Investment Fund, told me. "He has used it shamelessly parochially, and for that we are very grateful."

Not surprisingly, the prospect of someone with Rangel's politics heading the committee that writes the nation's tax code has given a lot of people pause. First of all, there is the direct power that comes with the post, which previous Ways and Means chairmen like Wilbur Mills and Dan Rostenkowski leveraged into virtual veto authority over major legislation. Then there is the indirect benefit of the job's fund-raising capacity—with so many tax breaks to hand out, it is nearly limitless—which nowadays is almost as important.

Rangel seems to take a certain pleasure in all the discomfiture. He likes to tell stories about nervous executives who have gradually lost their sense of color the closer he has come to the chairmanship, and he has openly exploited his proximity to the post to raise millions of dollars for the congressional Democrats. At the same time, he seems to be taking some pains to try to ease the anxiety. Many in the business community interpreted his vote this past spring to normalize trade relations with China as one such gesture; the vote ran counter to the position advocated by most of Rangel's traditional allies in organized labor, and infuriated many of them.

"I'm the C.E.O.s' new best friend," Rangel told me, chuckling. "Some of them say, 'Have I ever told you about the great job you're doing?' And I say, 'No, I don't think you have.' "

The southern border of Rangel's congressional district starts at the Hudson at 127th Street, follows a saw-tooth pattern around the top of Central Park, and ends at the East River, at 96th Street. The district's original lines were drawn by a reluctant New York State Legislature in the early nineteen-forties as part of one of the nation's first efforts to create a black seat. It has since had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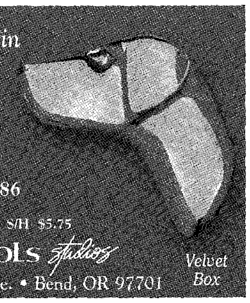

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only two occupants, Rangel and, before him, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.

Rangel lives roughly in the center of the district, at 135th Street and Lenox Avenue, directly across from Harlem Hospital. One morning this summer, I visited him at his apartment, which is spacious and bright and eclectically decorated with vases and mirrors and various knickknacks from the Congressman's assorted travels. Rangel has been married for thirty-six years, and has two children, Alicia, who is an advertising executive in New York, and Steven, who is a lawyer in Washington. Shortly after I arrived, Rangel's wife, Alma, whom he frequently describes as long-suffering, brought us a tray with coffee, croissants, and melon. She urged me to let her husband talk so that I could eat, and her tone suggested that she did not think he would need much encouragement.

Rangel's talk about himself is so much more irreverent than that of most successful politicians that it is easily mistaken for candor. Rangel, who never really knew his own father, grew up with his mother and grandfather, Charles Wharton, in a brownstone at 132nd Street and Lenox Avenue; at one point during our conversation, he took me over to the balcony to point out the building. By his own account, he was an unpleasant child, adored by his mother but scorned by his grandfather. "I was just a mean little son of a bitch," he told me. "I am so nice to kids now. Even bastard kids I'm nice to, because I see myself."

On Saturdays, Rangel and his younger sister used to go downtown with their grandfather to the criminal courthouse, where Wharton worked as an elevator operator. Rangel now believes that the trips with his grandfather are what drew him to the law, but for a long time, he says, he refused to admit this to himself.

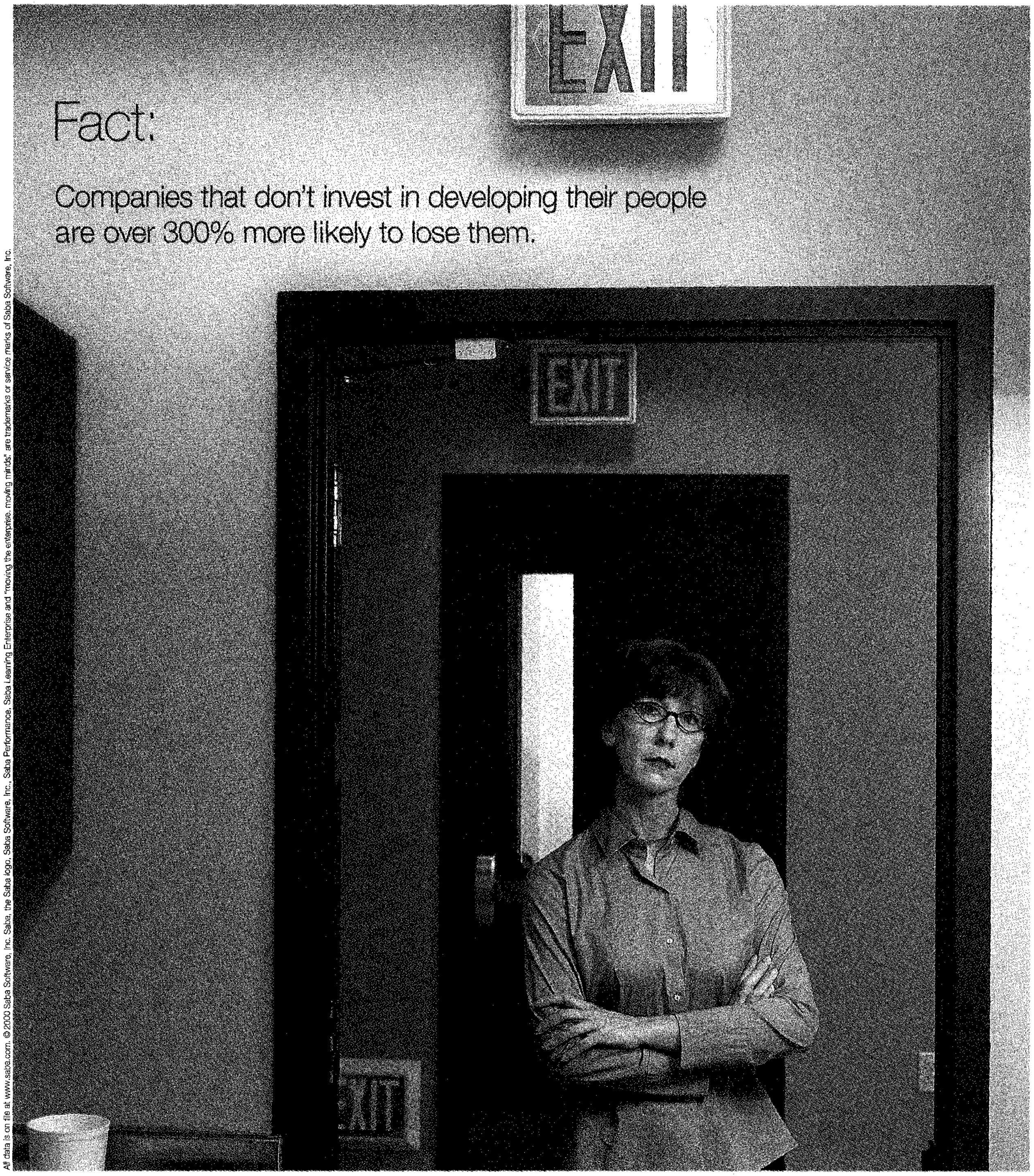
"Because of seniority, my grandfather became the head elevator operator, which meant he took up only the assistant district attorneys, the district attorney, and the judges," he said. "And, oh, he would bow and scrape! And they would say, 'Hey, Charlie, how're you doing?,' and he was 'Oh, O.K., Mr. O'Dwyer, have you met my grandchildren?' And I'd never seen my grandfather bow and scrape. He was a tough little man—tough on me, tough on the people in the block. He wore this damn uniform of his in the block, he wore this little badge, and he was respected, because he was no ordinary elevator operator."

Before Rangel went off to Korea, he had dropped out of high school, and when he came back he held down a series of lousy jobs, culminating in one that involved hauling lace through the garment district. One rainy afternoon, he had an epiphany, or at least half of one, on Thirty-sixth Street. The hand truck that he was pushing got away from him, the boxes fell into the street, and cops began cursing him for holding up traffic. Then and there, he resolved to make something of himself, though he was not at all sure what, and he walked away, leaving the hand truck and the boxes in the gutter. "My grandfather, when I told him that I was going to go to college—he laughed himself to death," Rangel said. "He didn't know anybody that went to college. *I* didn't know anybody who went to college."

With help from the G.I. bill, Rangel graduated from New York University in 1957, and then received a full scholarship to attend St. John's University Law School. While at St. John's, he interned at the Manhattan District Attorney's office with some of the same lawyers his grandfather was still taking up in his elevator. "They gave me a going-away party there, and I invited my grandfather," he recalled. "He was so pissed off, because all the people that had called him Charlie were calling me Mr. Rangel."

Rangel explains his entrance into politics with yet another story about his grandfather. Wharton was nearing retirement age, and was afraid that he would be forced out of his job at the courthouse. To keep that from happening, Rangel joined the local Democratic club. After a few years of trying to work his way up in the club, he left it and joined a group of self-styled young "reformers," led by Percy Sutton. When Sutton became the Manhattan borough president, he installed Rangel in his old seat in the State Assembly. To this day, the two are the closest of friends and political allies. "Incidentally," Rangel informed me, apparently not wanting to leave any mistaken impressions, "Percy never was a real reformer."

Frank Guarini, a former Democratic congressman from New Jersey, served with Rangel for fourteen years on Ways and Means, and also for a time on the Select Committee for Narcotics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Abuse and Control. He recalls travelling with Rangel to Burma and meeting the country's dictator, General Ne Win, to discuss drug trafficking in the region. Toward the end of the meeting, Win asked the delegation members if there was anything more he could do for them. Rangel said yes. The General was dressed in his military uniform, and Rangel particularly admired one of his insignias. Could he take it home? Flattered, the dictator handed it over. "Charlie could charm the Devil," Guarini said.

Like most politicians, Rangel is immensely gregarious. He is also, at least in his private dealings, a reflexive optimist, who sees possibilities where others see only barriers or limits. That warmth helps explain what is otherwise a rather puzzling fact about him. For years now, Rangel, as a public figure, has been known as one of the most outspoken, most partisan, and most caustic members of Congress, which is why he is so much in demand on the political talk-show circuit. Rangel, a Catholic, once lashed out at John Cardinal O'Connor, saying, "If the Church paid nearly as much attention to life after birth instead of life before birth, it would make a greater contribution." Five years ago, in a fight over eliminating a tax break for broadcast properties sold to minority-owned businesses, he likened the current Ways and Means Committee chairman, Representative Bill Archer, of Texas, to Hitler.

And yet Rangel has a network of friends which extends in virtually all directions. Former Representative Guy Vander Jagt, a conservative Republican from Michigan, describes Rangel as his "polar opposite" politically but also as one of his best friends. "Charlie is a tremendous consensus builder," he told me. "He's going to find a way to make things work." Once, I watched Rangel spar on MSNBC with Representative David Dreier, of Los Angeles, another Republican and ideological opponent. Afterward, when the cameras were off, Dreier pleaded with Rangel to set a lunch date with him. (Rangel promised to check his schedule and get back to him.)

Representative Gregory Meeks, a black Democrat from Queens, considers Rangel his mentor. He told me that it was Rangel who taught him "how to get things done," and he described the Congressman's teachings as follows: "First, you establish a personal relationship with someone—try to understand why they do what they do. Sooner or later, they'll need a favor. Then they'll come back and deliver for you."

In representing the interests of New York City on the Ways and Means Committee, Rangel frequently depends on the favors of others. The city's many idiosyncrasies—its high cost of living, for example, and its high rate of poverty—mean that it is almost always seeking federal formulas or income criteria that are different from those sought by the rest of the country. Typically, Rangel measures his success by a number buried deep inside some bill, which has been recalculated to reflect the difficulties of life in New York, and to which a lot of other lawmakers, with other agendas, had to agree.

Politics of this nature is not just an inside game; it is inside the inside, and also almost entirely white. Rangel helped found the Congressional Black Caucus, but at the same time he has always been close to congressional Democratic leaders, starting with Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill, who was the majority whip when Rangel arrived in Washington, in 1971, and continuing today with Richard Gephardt, the House minority leader. In 1984, when Jesse Jackson ran against Walter Mondale for the Democratic Presidential nomination, Rangel, unlike practically every other black politician in the country, supported Mondale, who had served in the Senate. "It was a very, very political decision," Rangel told me when I asked him about this. "A very practical political decision." (The decision did not, however, prevent him from becoming friends with Jackson. When the two ran into each other in Los Angeles, they embraced, and I heard Rangel joke to Jackson, "I vote for you all the time.")

Rangel was, perhaps most significantly, also a good friend of Rostenkowski's when Rostenkowski ruled Ways and Means. The former chairman told me that he had always been able to count on Rangel's support when he needed it. "I used to get a kick out of it," Rostenkowski said. "He would say, 'Dan, what did I decide to do here?' " Frank Guarini, who himself did not always get along with Rostenkowski, told me that Rangel had been able to "charm" Rostenkowski, "and so he got what he wanted."

GAS
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"Three hundred dollars' of regular."

In Harlem, Rangel measures his success by his involvement—typically protective, and often self-protective—in the life of his district, and as he has risen through the ranks in Washington he has never lost interest in the details (some would say the minutiae) of neighborhood affairs. Rangel is the only congressman in New York who remains a

Vittorio Valabrega (Italian, 1861-1952), *Chimneypiece*, 1900, walnut, ceramic, brass, glass; The Mitchell Wolfson Jr. Collection; The Wolfsonian–Florida International University, Miami Beach

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Democratic district leader, which means that if he wanted to he could vote at the kind of meetings where local judicial nominations are decided.

Rangel won his seat by running against Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., in a race that was made possible—and, according to Rangel, necessary—only by Powell's growing indifference to the district. A legendary figure in black New York, and for a time the most powerful African-American politician in the country, Powell was, by the late nineteen-sixties, sick, under investigation, and living in virtual exile in Bimini. Rangel was afraid that if he didn't run against Powell someone else would, and run him—Rangel—out of politics as well. "Adam had lost the confidence of the people in Harlem," he told me.

For a long time after the 1970 election, Rangel and Percy Sutton, along with a few other friends, including David Dinkins, who served as the city clerk and then as the Manhattan borough president before becoming mayor, effectively controlled Harlem politics. This was a wonderful irony, given that Sutton's rise had been predicated on the notion that he was fighting the machine. The "reformers" more or less set up their own machine, and Rangel's career reflects the strengths and also the weaknesses of this way of operating.

By valuing friendship and loyalty as much as he does, Rangel often seems to give short shrift to other qualities, like talent or technical know-how. For more than two decades, for example, he was the patron of a group called the Harlem Urban Development Corporation, a state-government agency that was created in 1971 to foster economic growth in the neighborhood and was dissolved in 1995. Even the most benign account of what the group did with the tens of millions of dollars in public funds it received would have to acknowledge that a considerable amount of it was spent ineffectively; many critics, however, have gone much further, and accused H.U.D.C. of basically being a high-priced patronage operation. When New York began turning over city-owned housing to private developers for rehabilitation, H.U.D.C., in its efforts to protect its own turf, largely prevented this from happening in Harlem, with the result, as one housing expert put it to me, that the neighborhood is now "a decade behind the rest of the city."

"Charlie, to his credit, won't let anyone push him around, and he insists that if it's in Harlem he's going to have control," this person told me. "No one has ever thought he lined his own pockets, but he trusted others who have not served him well."

During the recent investigation by the state attorney general's office into allegations of mismanagement at the Apollo Theatre, Rangel's style was publicly, and painfully, put on display. For many years, Rangel was the chairman of the board of the nonprofit group that ran the theatre, while a company owned by Percy Sutton produced a weekly television program there, "It's Showtime at the Apollo." A lawsuit by the attorney general, which named both men as defendants, accused Rangel's board of failing to collect millions of dollars it was owed by Sutton's enterprise. Both men were eventually cleared of criminal wrongdoing, but after months of newspaper coverage most New Yorkers had probably already concluded that the former borough president had received favorable treatment from his friend the congressman. Perhaps even more damaging, the scandal drew attention to the fact that during the years Rangel had control of the board the theatre itself had only sunk further into disrepair.

Over the last three decades, Rangel has obviously steered a great deal of government largesse toward Harlem, which is one of the primary reasons he wields so much influence in the district. Along with another ideological opponent, former Congressman Jack Kemp, Rangel was a moving force behind the creation of federal empowerment zones—specially designated areas that receive favorable tax treatment and certain forms of aid—and, not surprisingly, one is situated in his district. The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone has succeeded, among other things, in attracting a new mall, Harlem U.S.A., to 125th Street, the completion of which has led to much hopeful talk about a commercial revival in the neighborhood, and even, somewhat hyperbolically, of a second Harlem Renaissance. Several knowledgeable people made the case to me that, while Rangel deserved enormous credit for the zone's creation, its

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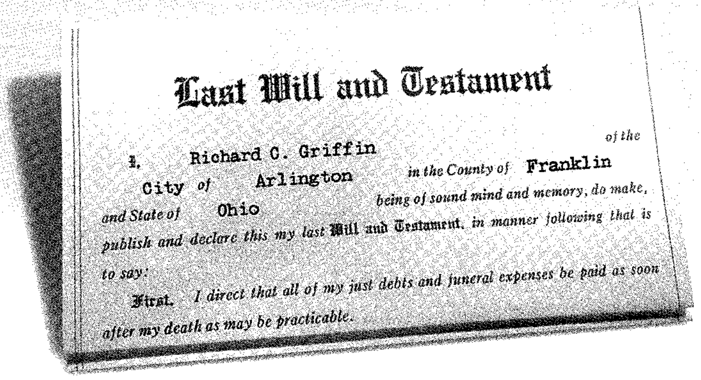

Last Will and Testament

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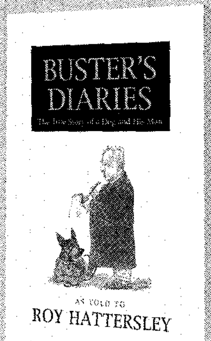

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success owes much to the fact that he subsequently lost control over its day-to-day operations.

Not long ago, when Congress was in recess, I spent a day with Rangel in his district. His first stop that morning was the auditorium of Harlem Hospital, for the dedication of a new emergency facility, which was being named in memory of a local community activist, Marshall England. According to a bio prepared by the hospital under the title "A Saint for Our Times," England, who died in January, was a tireless organizer, and always carried with him several bags filled with petitions. For the ceremony, a ribbon made of kente cloth had been stretched from one side of the stage to the other.

When Rangel arrived at the auditorium, the program listed eight speakers before him; nevertheless, he was immediately ushered onto the stage. "I've ofttimes said that when Judgment Day comes for me, and St. Peter tries to give me a hard time, I'm going to tell him that all of my public life I've represented Harlem Hospital, and I'm entitled to a break," he told the crowd. Rangel spoke in praise of England as a man of "integrity," as someone who "never stopped caring for his community," and as "an irritant to those people who really just wanted to accept the status quo." At one point, he broadened his remarks so that England's struggles became a metaphor for the struggles of Harlem, saying, "We've had our fights with every mayor, and yet we never allowed anyone from outside of our community to come in and criticize our hospital."

In many ways, Rangel is an anomalous figure in Harlem, where protesters and grassroots organizers like England are more the mainstream. As Rangel's own remarks indicate, his community is extremely suspicious of established political power, and he, too, would probably have been suspect if he ever seemed to want to claim that his success validated the system, or even one man's hard work and determination. But Rangel's rise, at least by his own account, has been a result of very different qualities—shrewdness, opportunism, and luck. "After that bitter ambush that I got caught with in Korea, I have never, ever, ever had a bad day," he once told me. "I can't complain about the cold, because so many of my friends froze to death. I can't complain about hard times, because I came from absolutely nothing to become a member of the United States Congress. And sometimes, in teasing people who are bitching and complaining, I say I wish I could do that, but if I did I'd hear this booming voice saying, 'Rangel! Didn't you just thank Me this morning?' "

After Rangel spoke at Harlem Hospital, he went on to a street naming, at 143rd Street and Convent Avenue, where he once again praised the honoree as a man who had struggled on behalf of unpopular causes, and then to his district office, which is in the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Office Building, on 125th Street. The waiting room of the office was filled with people who wanted help in fighting Con Edison or their landlords or, in many cases, the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Rangel had a meeting with one of his staff members about some projects in East Harlem, and made it clear that I was not invited to attend, so I went to sit in a conference room.

The room was lined with dozens of pictures of Rangel: with Nelson Rockefeller, with Tip O'Neill, with Walter Mondale, with Jimmy Carter, with Mario Cuomo, with Nelson Mandela, with Dr. Ruth. There were also several pictures of Rangel with J. Raymond Jones, who was the first black Democratic leader of Manhattan, and was known as the Harlem Fox. Rangel worked against Jones for a time, and then later with him. Jones died nearly a decade ago, at the age of ninety-one, and in one corner of the room I found a framed piece on him that had once run in the *News*. In it, Jones offered some advice to aspiring black politicians: "When they think you are going to hit them from the inside, you do it from the outside. Then when they think you are coming from the outside, you hit them from the inside." ♦

INFATUATION WITH SOUND OF OWN WORDS DEPARTMENT
From the Half Moon Bay (Calif.) Review.

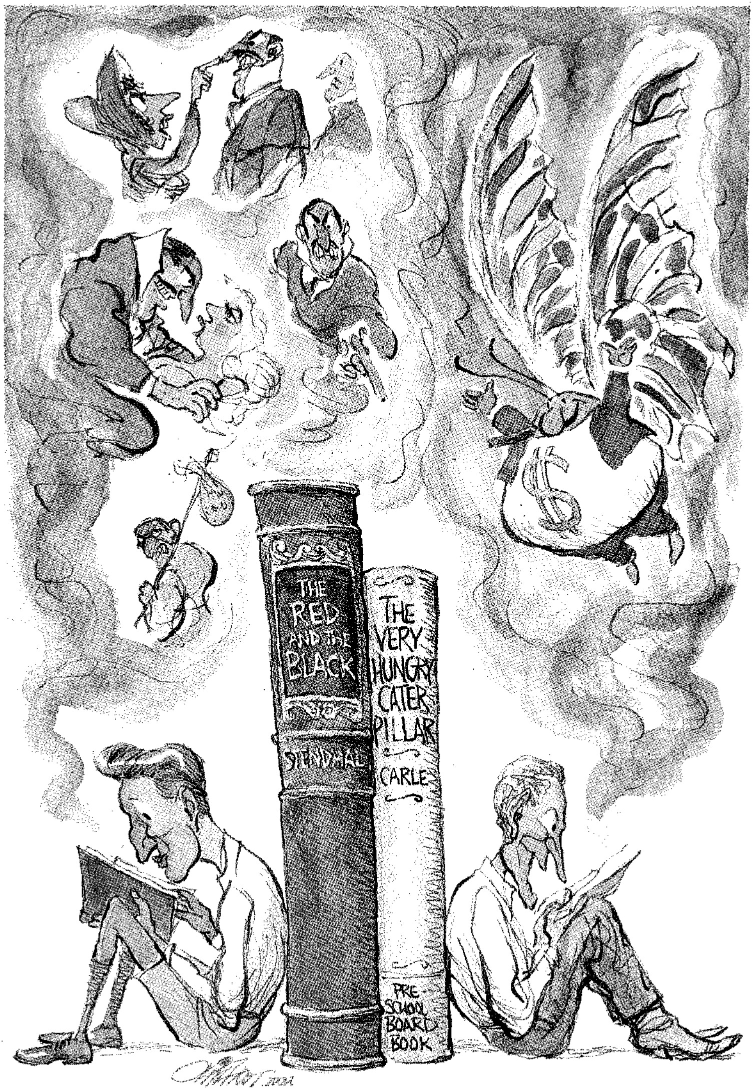
As if reversing the edict of God to beat swords into plowshares, by a vote of 3-2, the Half Moon Bay City Council ordered a moratorium on the weed-abatement practice of field disking within the city limits at their July 6 meeting.

DEPARTMENT OF LITERACY

TAKE ME TO YOUR READER

Politicians and their books.

BY ANTHONY LANE

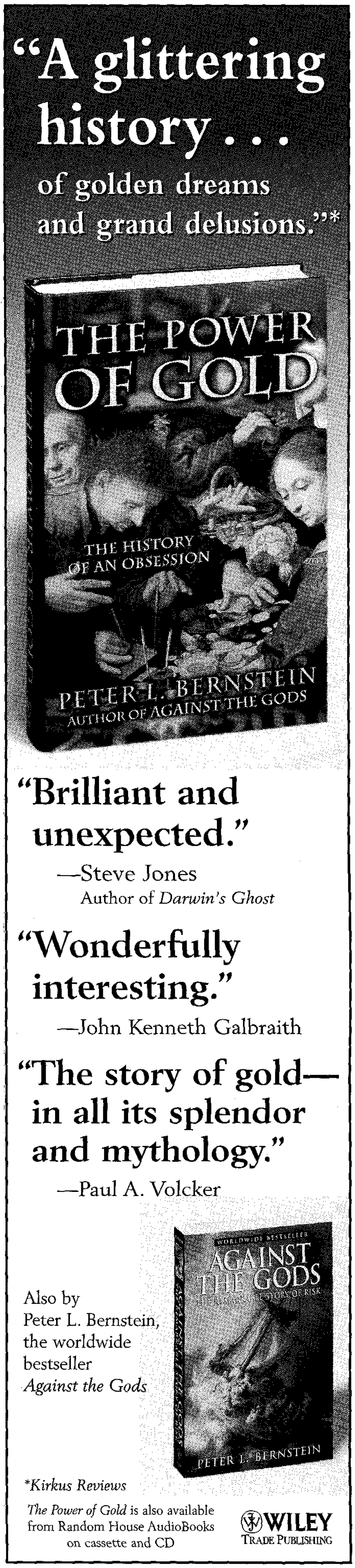


In a political existence, personal tastes will never be exempt from interpretation.

PAT OLIPHANT

On September 11th, Al Gore appeared on "Oprah" and confessed to millions of Americans that his favorite cereal was Wheaties. This admission was a bitter blow to those of us who have pegged him for a granola man. Whatever the urge to switch to Cinnamon Grahams, Gore could always be trusted—or so we thought—to greet each morning with a bowl of nutritious, semi-digestible clumps. Short of Joe Lieberman being found in a broom closet with a warm Snickers in his hand, was there anything that could do more damage to the crusade of the millennial Democrats? Yes, there was. Asked to name his favorite book, the Vice-President replied, "The Red and the Black."

Even as he spoke, I thought, Brilliant. He's got Nevada in the bag. How could the people of Las Vegas, huddled hopefully around the baize, begrudge a man who feels their pain so intensely that, every day, he sets aside a little quiet time to study the history of roulette? Then it hit me: he means the *novel*? As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"Edward attracts light."

in Stendhal? Gore's choice will have struck no chord with the vast constituency that Oprah attracts. She has wrought wonders with her monthly Book Club, which has allowed a number of shy, struggling authors to buy fifty-foot yachts with gold faucets; there seems to be an unspoken rule, however, that successful titles should contain one or more of the words "Heart," "True," and "Woman." What was Gore thinking? He had a chance to collar the sensitive self-improvement vote, and he blew it. Maybe that is why he fought so hard to reclaim lost ground, slipping into fluent Oprahspeak when asked how he had responded to his wife's depression. "To feel the love and search for the healing," said the candidate, thus suggesting that, on those occasions when he tires of Stendhal, he can be found curled up with the liner notes to early Whitney Houston albums.

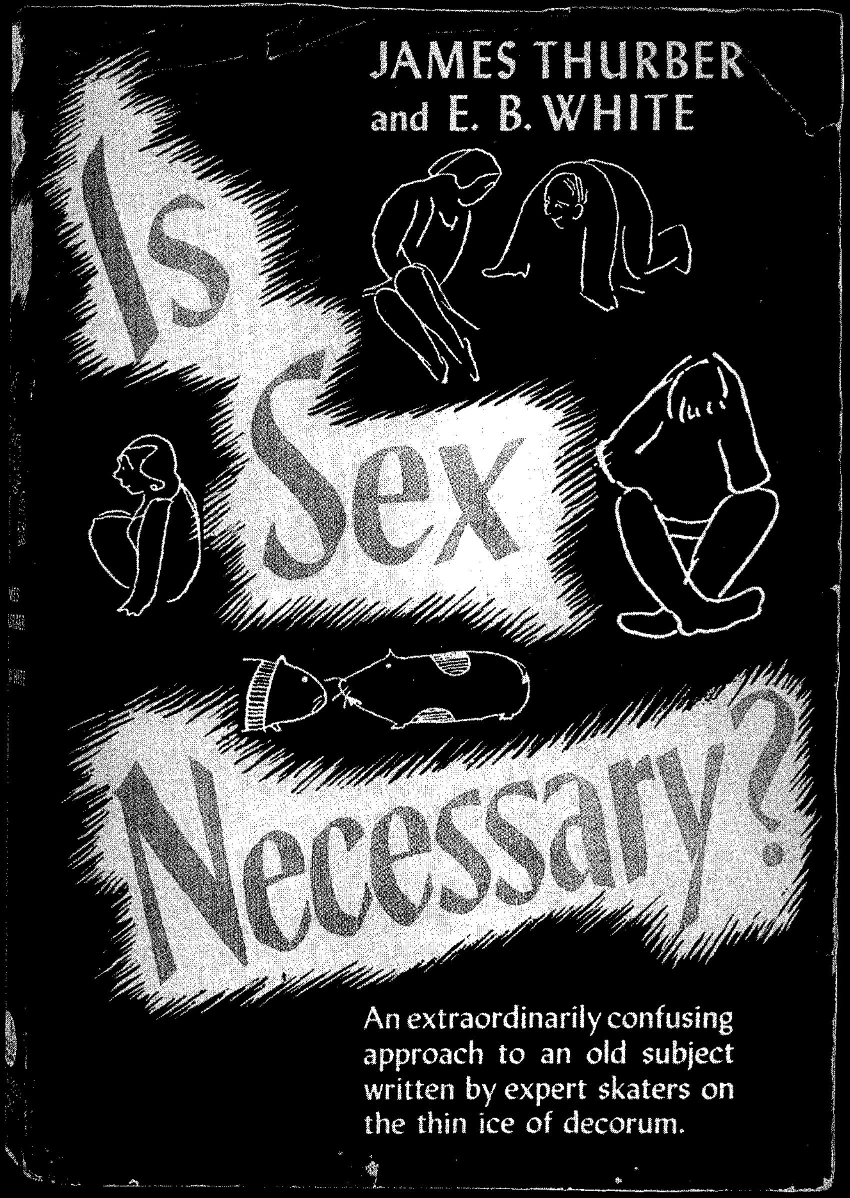
Reaction to his revelations was mixed; the most telling comment came in the *Times*, where the reporter informed readers that "The Red and the Black" was written by "19th century French novelist Robert Stendahl." That's an awful lot of mistakes in two words—where did that groovy "Robert" come from? But the main point of contention was Gore's wisdom in picking Stendhal, who is not only dead, white, European, and all too heatedly male but is rumored to have worn a toupee. As for "The Red and the Black," one could range widely through classic fiction without coming upon anything quite so unsuited to a political platform. Gore's speech at the Democratic Convention, in Los Angeles, was close to obsessive, easily outrighting the right in its tic-like invocation of family values; Stendhal's hero, Julien Sorel, is born into a family whose values are barely distinguishable from those of the sty. He loathes his father, takes a constant beating from his brothers, and cannot wait to quit his native home, which Stendhal gaily disdains as a sump of provincial pettiness. "The tyranny of public opinion (and what an opinion!) is as fatuous in the small towns of France as it is in the United States of America," he writes. They would love him in Tennessee.

Once free of his own family, Julien becomes tutor to the children of a local bigwig. He sleeps with the wife and winds up in Paris, where, by way of variation, he sleeps with the daughter of a marquis; denounced for his infamy by his earlier lover, Julien returns to the country, and shoots her in church. He is guillotined for his crimes, and the marquis's daughter insists on burying the head. Few of these activities could be described as vote winners, and one wonders what Al Gore prizes most in the whole saga. It is true that Julien, fired by an adolescent worship of Napoleon, believes in unfettered liberty. The liberty to do what, though? It is possible that Julien, given his head, might in time have chosen the right school, enjoyed a broad array of consumer options, and bought an electric car for the sake of the ozone layer; as things stood, however, what he truly sought was the freedom to get laid.

Could Bush find political capital in this? I would give it a try. After all, Joe Lieberman and Mrs. Gore have worried publicly about the fallout of slasher movies and video games; given that link—or, at least, the public perception that the link exists—Bush might as well proceed on the assumption that books, too, exert a naked influence on our conduct. He himself acknowledged as much when he was asked, in Iowa, to nominate his favorite political philosopher. "Christ," he replied, and was immediately charged with a slew of grave offenses: he was courting the Christian vote, he was displaying a pharisaical piety, he was dragging unsullied faith into the dust of the political arena. But what better place is there for the exercise of faith? I thought that Bush's answer, though he may have grabbed for it in panic, was perfectly respectable. Christ was put to death on the word of a political appointee, and he has given both sustenance and cause for quaking doubt to every generation of Western leader. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, especially if you have already quit the board of your oil company.

The level of literacy in the Bush household has become a topic of national curiosity. The evidence points to a reader of considerable gravity—someone intimate with Greek tragedy, the novels of Faulkner, and, above all, "The Brothers Karamazov." Unfortunately, the reader in question is Laura Bush, formerly a teacher and librarian. Given the choice between four years of White House dinners and a quiet evening in with Dostoyevsky, she might well plump for the latter, although old Washington hands would contend that there isn't much difference anyway. Bush himself is harder to pin down, but we are told that one book, in par-

October 5, 1980. Lost at the beginning of one midlife crisis.



JAMES THURBER
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ticular, has secured a place in his heart. The preferred reading of this year's Presidential candidates runs as follows. Gore: "The Red and the Black." Bush: "The Very Hungry Caterpillar." On rereading both works, each a landmark in its field, I find little to choose between them. The Stendhal is five hundred pages long, whereas the Eric Carle runs to an economical twenty, but, if you get the preschool Board Book edition, it comes up pretty thick. In both cases, the hero is defined almost entirely by the strength of his appetites; the bug's progress, through slices of cake and a variety of fruits, is weirdly Sorel-like in its insatiability. Where Carle departs from Stendhal is in the quality of mercy that he metes out; the caterpillar, far from being punished for his indulgence, suffers no more than a mild stomach ache before being transformed into a butterfly. It is a matchless parable for the entrepreneurial right, who are thus assured of nothing more than mildly discomforting taxation before they attain the bliss of their first, shimmering billion.

None of this is an accident; the Governor presumably ran his choice past a panel of advisers before taking it to the people. Such are the traps of a political existence: your personal tastes will be pulled inexorably toward your public acts, and nothing will be exempt from interpretation—just ask Bush's father, who paid for a chance remark with a truckload of broccoli on the lawn. The truly bookish know that the hangover of reading, as of music, is at once more intense and more diffuse than any other cognitive experience; when candidates are pressed for their favorite novels, however, it is impossible not to treat their choices as replete with significance—as furtive clues to character, perhaps, or guides to the formation of policy. A single book, we tell ourselves, speaks volumes. During the Second World War, Roosevelt apparently turned to Kierkegaard, who is one of the more testing authorities on human fault and folly; but would we have thought less of F.D.R. if he had subsisted, as an antidote to global attrition, on a diet of Sherlock Holmes?

Scanning the childhoods and schooldays of American Presidents, you invariably land upon a reference to their voracious reading; Bill Clinton may be the most spongiform of modern leaders, eager to a fault in his soaking up of other people's ideas, but that invaluable habit makes him not so much a freak as an extreme example of a Presidential type. That his mental ravening should have been part of a larger sensual gusto was both wholly unsurprising—in the world of letters, it is practically a sine qua non—and a hint of coming catastrophe. The most heartening moment in "First in His Class," David Maraniss's biography of Clinton, is the recital of a reading list from 1966: noodling in and out of his set texts, the future President read "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," with its brassy marital wars, and Evelyn Waugh's "The Loved One," which seems expressly designed to stop the reader from ever wanting to visit California. Clinton also picked up "A Thousand Days," Arthur Schlesinger's classic survey of the Kennedy Administration, but didn't finish it. Even for young men ablaze with ambition, there is a limit.

Victoria Roberts

"You know where we go to from here because we already went there."

By imagining, in our greed for psychological gossip, that politicians read only to enhance their sense of professional depth, we miss the fact that they may read in order to forget—to drift in the shallows of pleasure. Ronald Reagan was mocked for his addiction to Louis L'Amour, and there were times, admittedly, when the quick-draw talents of frontier sheriffs seemed to have a direct effect on his foreign policy; on the other hand, Reagan had turned to the comforts of adventurous fiction—Twain as well as Zane Grey—from an early age, and, according to Edmund Morris, the President was able to recite as many as two Robert Service poems by heart. A hundred and fifty years earlier, Ulysses S. Grant had been no less fanatic in his pursuit of literary thrills, forgoing his formal studies at West Point for the sake of Fenimore Cooper. That preference bore fruit when Grant, in the aftermath of his Presidency, sat down and wrote his "Personal Memoirs," which, for dramatic momentum, remain among the most galloping accounts of the Civil War. "A noun is the name of a thing," Grant had been made to repeat as a boy, until the sheer solidity—the thingness—of the world was drummed into him. There is no better start for a writer, although if he is to double as a leader of men, he had better brush up on his verbs.

It is this tension between the energy of governing and the enforced inactivity—suspiciously close to idleness—of the reader that has, for so long, complicated the issue of learning in American political life. You must study those who have come before you, but keep it quiet, for fear that the electorate will find you studious, and thus cast aspersions on your ability to act; even darker is the fear

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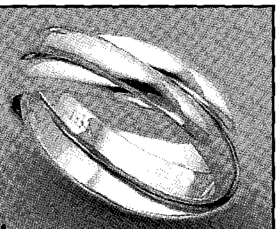

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that they may be right. No one was more torn in this respect, as in others, than Richard Nixon. Sitting in the front cabin of a DC-3, on a February night in 1968, Nixon—liveliest in the shadows, like Tolkien's Gollum—went to the core of the matter in the company of Garry Wills, who was then a young reporter at *Esquire*. Nixon spoke of his own particular hero, Woodrow Wilson: "I think he was our greatest President of this century. You'll notice, too, that he was the best educated. . . . Wilson had the greatest vision of America's world role. But he wasn't practical enough." The very force of Wilson's intellect, according to Nixon, was a hindrance to success; breadth of vision is a menace to the tough, narrow-eyed business of political decisions.

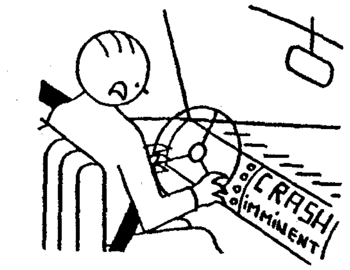
Nixon had his own response to this dilemma; his jowly brutishness, his tendency to spoil for a fight even when there was none in the offing, denied his opponents the luxury of decrying him as a thinker. There are, thankfully, less prickly ways to pursue the same plan. The literary career of Theodore Roosevelt, for instance, feels as flamboyantly stage-managed as his political one; there was the three-volume "Winning of the West," a history of New York, and, best of all, "Hunting Trips of a Ranchman," which may or may not have a place on Al Gore's bedside table. As a reader, Roosevelt went through books as bullishly as he went through bears; there was nothing *belles* about *lettres*, and it would have taken a brave enemy to accuse him of being an intellectual, with all the tinges of rareness and refinement that wreathe that unfortunate word. Roosevelt was mightily relieved, after he left the White House, not to be offered the presidency of Harvard; after one college meeting, he said, "I felt like a bull-dog who had strayed into a symposium of perfectly clean, white, Persian cats." The electorate knew he was smart, and part of that smartness was to stay clear of those who were nothing but.

When it came to the matter of literary criticism, the bulldog snapped his leash, taking the fight into the heartlands of world literature, and laying waste to every species of outrage. He held his nose at Zola's "conscientious descriptions of the unspeakable," asserted that Dickens, of all people, had no notion of a gentleman, and rose to a magnificent denunciation of Tolstoy, who was said to perpetrate "a fantastic theory of race annihilation by abstention from marriage." It is a tragedy that the Teddist school of criticism, which should have spawned a SWAT team of disciples, was allowed to die out; in these scrawny, bloodless days of post-structuralism, we could use a touch of his moral spring cleaning. "Pride and Prejudice"? A monstrous procrastination of the breeding process. "Oedipus Rex"? A cynical mangling of domestic unity in the lower Balkans. "The Winter's Tale"? A gross misrepresentation of the locomotive habits of the bear.

What a difference half a century makes. The gulf between the age of Webster, for instance, and the robust, unclassical bravado of Theodore Roosevelt seems twice as great as the distance from Roosevelt to us. On the other side of the Atlantic, the discrepancy is even more glaring; a statesman like Gladstone was so steeped in Greek and Latin that one can far more easily imagine him in the Roman forum than on C-SPAN. More to the point, he was not alone; the record of his reading habits proves that what really matters about the erudition of our leaders is not how clever it makes them appear (which is something they can try to control) but the climate of sensibility that prevails in their audience (which is something, like the weather, they must live with). In 1883, Gladstone rose and addressed the House of Commons:

> Many members of this House will recollect, perhaps, the noble and majestic lines—for such they are—of the Latin poet:
> *"Omnis enim per se divum natura necesse est,*
> *Immortali aevo summa cum pace fruatur . . ."*

And so on, for six lines. Roy Jenkins, in his biography of Gladstone, gets it wrong; his version has Gladstone commending "the majestic and noble lines of Lucretius." But Gladstone didn't need



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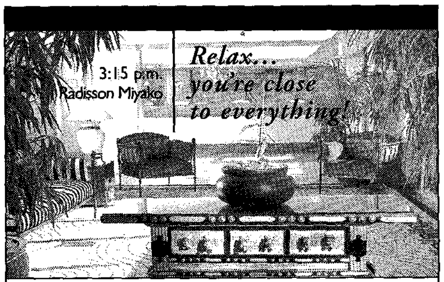

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to add the name; he functioned on the principle that his listeners would already be acquainted with "the Latin poet" in question, and that to specify him would be vulgar and insulting. If by any chance they failed to identify the quotation, he would flatter them with the implication that they *did* know it. Either way, he won.

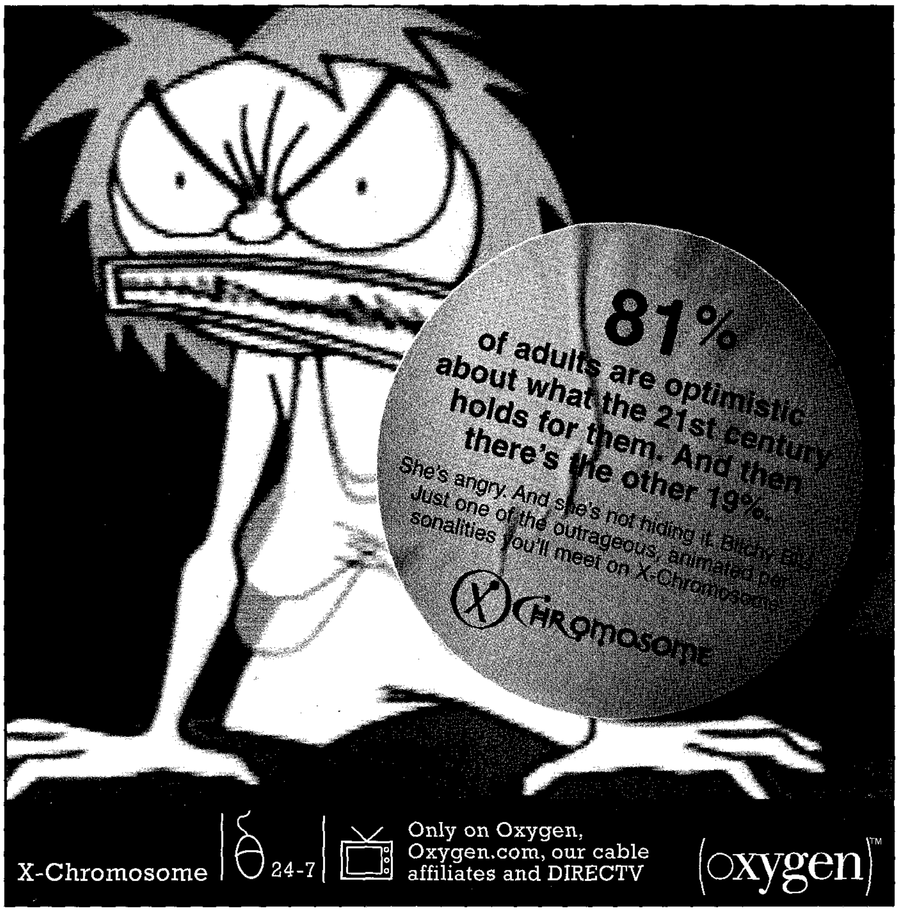
Then there were the times when nobody was listening—when there was no need to show one's scholarly colors. You would assume that Gladstone's budget speech of 1859 had occupied him, body and soul, in the preceding hours and days. Not so; his reading, prior to the speech, had been "Idylls of the King." Tennyson, he wrote in his diary, "has grasped me with a strong hand." But what, exactly, passed from hand to hand? Did Gladstone read for diversion, or did the tales of Arthurian striving somehow feed into his fiscal strategy? He himself worried away at the connection, and one result was a fifteen-thousand-word essay on Tennyson—a respectful homage, although Gladstone pauses to chastise "Maud" for its martial glorifying. Twenty years later, when he reprinted the article, he tacked on an apology: the "war-spirit in the outer world," he wrote, "dislocated my frame of mind, and disabled me from dealing even tolerably with the work as a work of imagination." This is an amazing, not to say unnecessary, plea: Do forgive me for the frailty of my close textual reading, but I happened to be running the finances of the world's largest empire at the time, and I'm afraid I took my eye off the ball.

This strange entwining of pride and humility, of grandly worn endeavor crossed with self-abasement, is crucial to our sense of Gladstone; as a monument, he is unlocked by his chronic love of books. Most students of Victorian England have snickered at his weakness for prostitutes, whom he would pick up for the purpose not of sex but of spiritual consolation, talking and reading with them in an effort to steer them from the path of sin; less well known is his passion for dirty books, which, like the life of the hookers, so inflamed and repelled him that he was forced to flagellate himself after every perusal. And the kind of filth he read?: "Fabliaux et Contes des Poètes Français du XI-XV Siècles." In the fall of

1845, he prescribed a list of remedies for this excitable state, including a promise "not in E to look over books in bookshops except known ones." "E" stood for England; perhaps a touch of license was allowed in foreign parts.

It would be wonderful to find a modern politician who had to drag himself away from bookstores. Tony Blair, say, seems to have spent the first half of his career gleaning a good education—private school and Oxford—and the second half covering it up. Before he was elected Prime Minister, in 1997, he made frequent mention of the Christian philosopher John Macmurray, whose arguments for social justice had gripped him at university, but we have heard almost nothing of Macmurray since; even P. G. Wodehouse, of whom Blair formerly pronounced himself a fan, dropped mysteriously from his list of favorite books, as if the gin-based aroma of the Drones Club were too rich and snooty an atmosphere for the cleaner, more puritan air of New Labour. Many commentators have been perplexed by the anti-highbrow vigor of the British Government, which, in its unflinching impulse to answer the needs of the people, dares not deviate from popular taste. Quote Shakespeare in England, and you might lose a couple of votes; quote Lucretius, and you could lose an election.

In a pleasing reversal, it is the White House that has held its cultural nerve. When Blair, in the first year of his administration, was invited to Washington, he and Bill Clinton proposed toasts to each other. The President mentioned Madison, Shakespeare, and Auden; the Prime Minister told a joke about Winnie-the-Pooh. According to Clinton, "It is difficult to imagine Jefferson, for example, without John Locke before him; difficult to imagine Lincoln without knowing that he read Shakespeare and Bunyan on the frontier." That is flattering, informative, and quite possibly something that Clinton remembered himself, without recourse to his researchers. Blair's response was to offer a story about Churchill bursting into tears, and to break into his now customary gulp-and-rush: "I mean, I know, look, we've only been in nine months—this is the thing. I don't know . . . " It looks even worse on the page, but then the page is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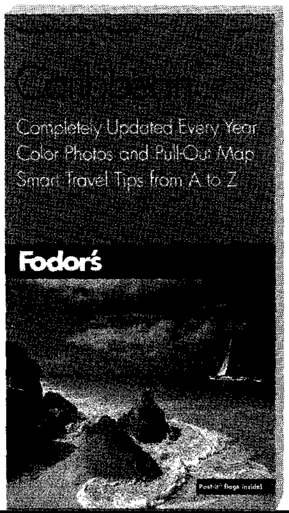
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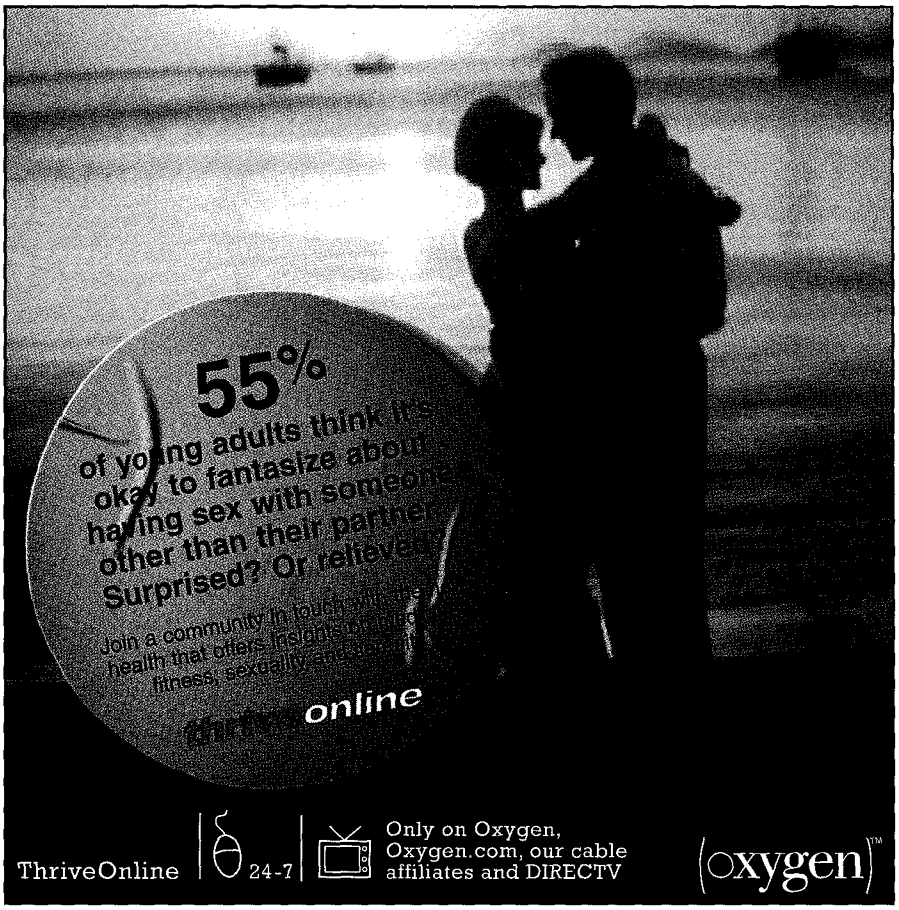
not Blair's arena; he knows that his blokeish, calculated anti-rhetoric sounds (and, to do him credit, often is) more sincere and sympathetic than Clinton's careful craft. It is a grim indictment of our age, nonetheless, that historians will remember this President not for the reach of his intellect but for his one irrevocable failing. Still, he alone must take the blame; if he really wanted a great poem for his Inauguration, he shouldn't have asked Maya Angelou.

So has anyone got it right? Has there ever been a public figure whose library led him to greatness? The obvious answer is Lincoln, whose speeches emerged from prolonged reading and yet made perfect sense to men and women who had never read a book. Works of literature were no substitute for experience, but they enabled him to press and filter it into a form that not only was swiftly grasped but, by a dazzling sleight of hand, reapproached the condition of art. Such is one's feeling, at any rate, after finishing Garry Wills's "Lincoln at Gettysburg." Wills, who somehow survived his nocturnal encounter with Richard Nixon, went on to write a microscopic analysis of the Gettysburg speech, noting its allusion to masters as different as Thucydides and the American transcendentalists. Even more telling than Lincoln's allusion to Pericles, however, was the fact that he never spoke the word "Pericles"—nothing to fence him off from his audience, or to tell them that his minting of a fresh, uncomplicated language (and thus, by implication, of a less troubled country) was at once unoriginal and new.

The preceding speaker was Edward Everett, who bolstered the occasion by quoting Milton's "Paradise Regained"—an inspiring choice, but one that required him to change gear and break the stately procession of his prose. Altogether, Everett's oration lasted two hours. Lincoln, as everyone knows, took three minutes, and spoke two hundred and seventy words. From that moment, soaked in history, flowed a whole tradition of modern speech; you may deplore the ubiquity of the sound bite, and see it as the bastard offspring of television, but it is also the dim descendant of Lincoln's supreme brevity. There is something of Honest Abe, too, in the small scrap of paper that Harry Truman folded into



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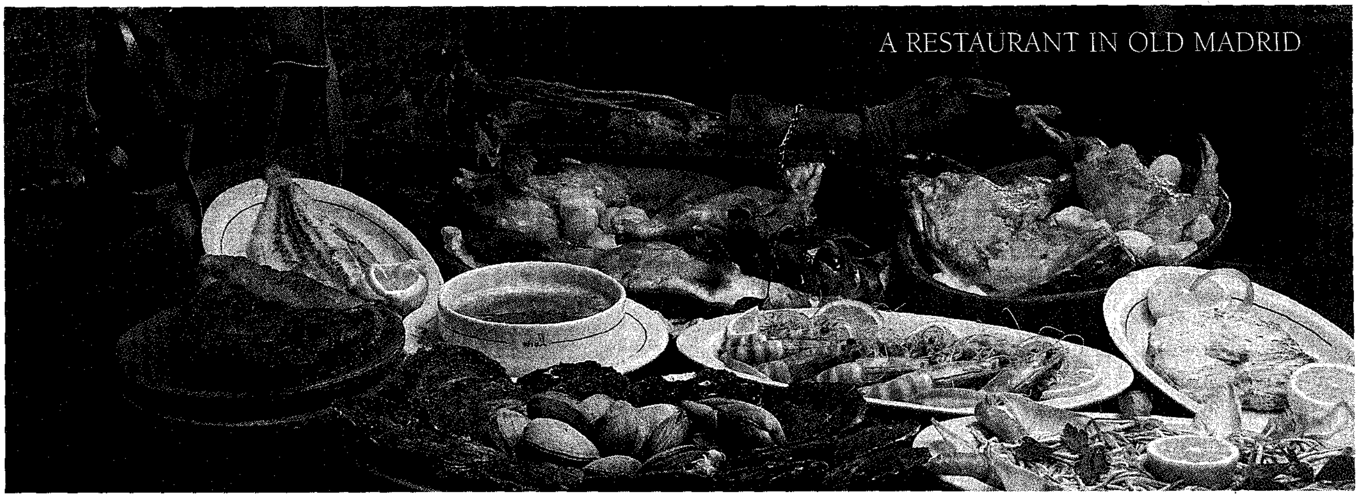

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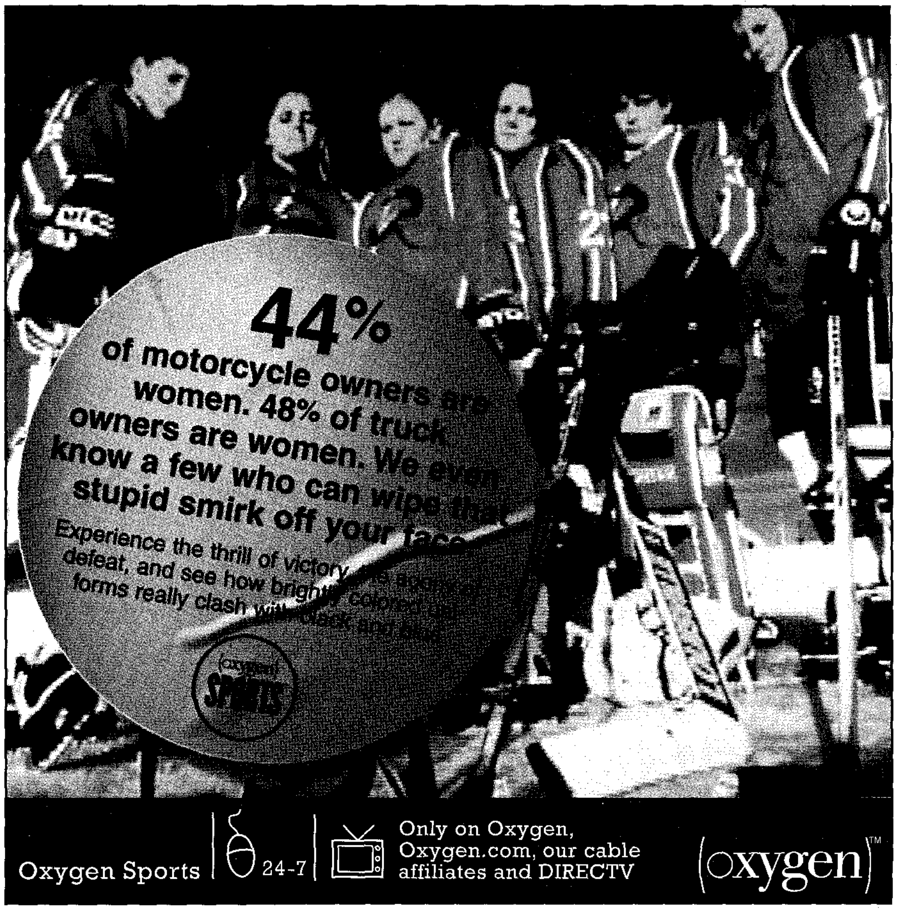
his wallet when he left high school, and that stayed there, in a succession of crumpled copies, for the rest of his life; on it were written lines from “Locksley Hall,” Tennyson’s paean—half rousing, half apprehensive—to the future. “There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe”: Truman to a T. One hopes, for his sake, that he never read “Locksley Hall Sixty Years After,” the bitter, less ambivalent sequel: “Rip your brothers’ vices open, strip your own foul passions bare.”

It is not too fanciful, even, to picture the shade of Lincoln following benignly in the footsteps of George W. Bush. Cynics claim that the Governor is driven to his more radiant malapropisms by words of many syllables—witness “subsidation” and “subliminable”—but such a claim is grossly unjust. In fact, it is words of *one* syllable that toss him off the road. He is the Danny Kaye of national politics, effortlessly conjuring a tongue twister from situations where tongues should have nothing to fear. Would the survivors of Gettysburg not have nodded their weary heads at Bush’s thrilling line “We must all hear the universal call to like your neighbor just like you like to be liked yourself”? Has anyone summed up the blood-filled rift between North and South with more tragic bafflement: “It was us versus them, and it was clear who the them was. Today, we’re not so sure who the they are, but we know they’re there”? Above all, how could Lincoln not have heeded the despairing, Old Testament cry of “Is our children learning?” And, if they isn’t, then which of we is showing they the way? Bush himself made a good start in his acceptance speech at the Republican Convention—a far better effort than Al Gore’s, although Bush made the elementary error of forgetting to snatch a mouthful of his wife’s lipstick before he began to speak. Quoting Robert Frost, the Governor announced his intention to “occupy the land with character.” It’s a strident and uplifting line, one that Gore himself might have coveted. That someone other than Bush may have noticed it first and pulled it into the spotlight is all part of the show. George Bush will never be Pericles, but he is a very hungry caterpillar; who knows, come November, what paragon may not burst forth? ♦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A REPORTER AT LARGE

EIGHT YEARS

Bill Clinton and the politics of persistence.

BY JOE KLEIN

In the six days after the Washington *Post* reported, on January 21, 1998, that the President of the United States had apparently been caught having an affair with a White House intern—as the world watched him nervously parse tenses ("There is no improper relationship"), and then shake his finger at the cameras and utter the words that for many of his critics define his Presidency, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky"—Bill Clinton set out to convince his staff that the Presidency wasn't crumbling. Only a handful of political advisers dealt with the scandal; almost everyone else, including the President, continued working on the substance of the office, which, that week, was the preparation of the State of the Union Message.

Clinton never mentioned Monica Lewinsky as he proceeded with this work, but members of the staff found it difficult to focus on the task at hand. Televisions are ubiquitous in the White House, usually tuned to the all-news cable networks; now they were broadcasting the most remarkable scenes. The daily press briefing was carried on CNN, and it seemed a near-riot; Wolf Blitzer reported that a Presidential resignation might be imminent. One day, as Michael Waldman, Clinton's chief speechwriter, was watching the mayhem, he was paged by the President, and wondered if he might be asked to work on a resignation speech. But Clinton, studiously oblivious, wanted to talk about a memo from Stephen Carter, the Yale law professor. "Did you check out this language for the 'idea of America' section?" he asked. "Try to work it in."

Privately, the President wasn't quite so stalwart. There were anguished conversations with his closest advisers, including his wife—conversations in which Clinton denied his involvement with the young woman and even suggested that Monica Lewinsky had been "stalking" him. There was an odd, dispirited Super Bowl party, attended by Jesse Jackson, among others; Jackson stayed on afterward to pray with the President, and to console his wife and daughter. Clinton's old friend the television producer Harry Thomason flew in from California to help with the crisis. All the details that later proved, astonishingly, true—the semen-stained dress, the banal gifts, the passionate phone calls, the inference that oral sex might not count as sex—became known during those first few days.

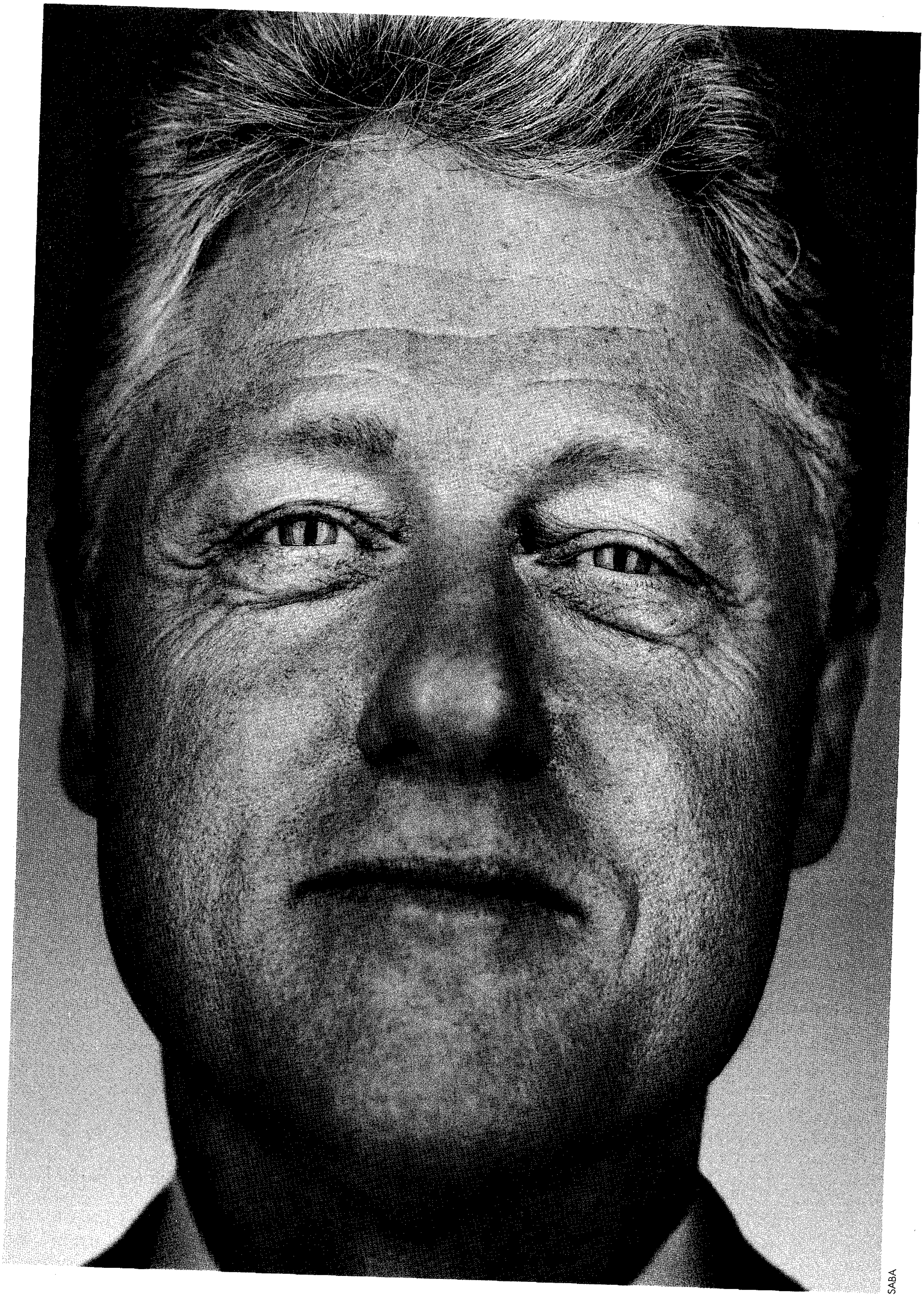
But the President also spent long hours rehearsing, rewriting, and sometimes rethinking sections of the State of the Union Message. At these times, Clinton appeared able to lose himself in the work; after a shaky first day or two, he didn't even seem particularly depressed or distracted. "The thing I remember is how smoothly everything seemed to go, more so than other years," Sylvia Mathews, then a deputy chief of staff, said. "He showed up on Saturday with a draft covered with his left-handed scrawls—it was obvious he'd spent the night before working on the text. He'd say things like 'I've cut out fifteen words here. Listen to this.' Everything had to get better and better, tighter and tighter."

Over time, Clinton had transformed the State of the Union ritual into more than just a speech. It was now a six-month process, in which he organized his annual legislative agenda. The President believed the address was his best chance to communicate in an unfiltered way—usually at length—with the American people. The media derided these gargantuan efforts, but the public seemed to appreciate them, which made the annual exercise all the more satisfying. There was, consequently, a discipline to the process that must have seemed odd to old friends of the scattered, garrulous Bill Clinton. But this was a different White House from the floating bull session of the first term; and this was a different Clinton—more reserved, more dignified, more Presidential. (No wonder the Lewinsky story seemed so implausible, so "old Clinton," to some of his closest aides.) Indeed, as he stood behind the "blue goose"—his full-dress lectern—in the Family Theatre that Saturday and tried out his lines before most of his staff, the President may have been the only person in the room wearing a jacket and tie.

Clinton and his staff had spent much of their energy that year trying to think through a novel political conundrum. In 1997, the President had negotiated a balanced budget with the Republican majority in Congress, and now, for the first time in thirty years, there was the prospect of a surplus. The Republicans wanted to use the money for a tax cut. "But everyone knew that the budget wasn't really balanced," Robert Rubin, who was then Treasury Secretary, recalls. "Surpluses were being projected—not the sort of surpluses we eventually got; no one saw those coming at that point—but we also expected that discretionary spending was likely to exceed the forecast. A tax cut would probably throw us back into deficits. We had a series of meetings starting in October, searching for a strategy. I think it was John Hilley"—a Presidential aide in charge of legislative affairs—"who first came up with the idea of saving the surplus to preserve Social Security."

This was to be the dramatic oratorical ploy of the 1998 State of the Union Message. The President would oppose a tax cut in an election year. Clinton wanted to take his stand in a deft, dramatic way; his speechwriters were having difficulty coming up with the right words, though. Then, in the midst of the Saturday rehearsal, as he reached the point where he asked the rhetorical ques-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARTIN SCHOELLER



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tion "What should we do with our surplus?" Clinton suddenly interrupted himself and said, "Hey, I've got an idea. How about this: 'I have a simple, four-word answer: Save Social Security first.' "

The President stopped, and smiled. The staff responded enthusiastically. Then he waved his arms out, broadly, and said, "See, I haven't *totally* lost it."

Many of those closest to Bill Clinton believed that he had only recently mastered the Presidency. He had learned how to get what he wanted from a Republican Congress; he had successfully used military force in Bosnia, and was now more comfortable as Commander-in-Chief; he had learned his way around the world. "He had stopped acting like a governor," Donna Shalala, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, says, "and had become the President."

And yet it could be argued that Bill Clinton had come to the Presidency six years earlier with a coherent, if recondite, vision, and that he had pursued it rigorously, quite often in ways that were politically inexpedient. He had, by turns, alienated traditional liberals, conservatives, and moderates during his first term. Clinton, however, believed that the apparent contradictions in his agenda—support for free trade (which pleased conservatives) and for universal health insurance (which pleased liberals); support for welfare reform (which appalled liberals) and for affirmative action (which appalled conservatives)—were not contradictions at all but part of a larger mission: to manage the nation's transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age.

He had been using those words for years, but to most ears such formulations sounded like empty grandiosity, or, worse, messianic baby-boom hooey. (It was no accident that the other American politician retailing the notion of a "historic" economic paradigm shift in the eighties, and who used almost the same words as Clinton did, was Newt Gingrich.) Clinton had never found a way to articulate this vision credibly, much less succinctly. He wasn't even sure what to call his program. He had tried the New Choice, in 1991, and then the New Covenant, during the 1992 campaign. He called himself a New Democrat. He talked about "building a bridge to the twenty-first century" (for his second Inauguration, a model of that bridge had been built on the Mall, and paved with Astro-Turf). His latest attempt, only marginally more successful than the others, was to call his outlook the Third Way. And yet, by 1998, it was clear that something dramatic was, indeed, happening to the American economy: new technologies—the Internet, cellular-telephone service, cable and satellite television—were creating a global marketplace while transforming the most routine ceremonies of middle-class life.

This was a transformation, Clinton believed, similar to the development of a national economy, dominated by industrial trusts, early in the twentieth century. At that time, the government—led by Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson—responded by enacting a series of historic reforms to harness the new economy (from the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act to the imposition of the income tax and the creation of the Federal Reserve system); Clinton believed that his task was to enact a similar series of reforms, appropriate to the Information Age. But, as he prepared for the 1998 State of the Union, the President could point to no single accomplishment as grand as those of Roosevelt or Wilson. By force of personality and sheer persistence, he had slowly dragged Washington toward a recognition that a revised form of government activism might be appropriate in the anarchy of an instant economy, but he had won his victories in dribs and drabs; his defeats had been far more memorable.

Clinton was a spectacular communicator, even better—because of his intellectual acuity, his informality, and his ability to improvise from a podium—than Ronald Reagan had been. (Newt Gingrich once told me that he'd sat through a Clinton State of the Union speech thinking, We're dead. There's no way we're going to beat this guy.) But the President had never found a way to communicate his larger purpose to the American public, and this was a source of enduring frustration for him.

The 1998 State of the Union Message seemed the perfect moment to make another attempt, and several of the opening paragraphs were as lucid a statement of his political philosophy as he'd ever attempted. But, after Lewinsky, even the Social Security ploy seemed destined to be lost in the melodrama. In a way, the evening of January 27, 1998, would be a crystallization of the Clinton Presidency: solid policy and brilliant politics overshadowed by the consequences of tawdry personal behavior. His speechwriting staff spent hours scouring the text for double-entendres.

As he made his way into the House chamber just after nine o'clock, the President was greeted warmly, defiantly, by the Democrats who gathered near the center aisle to shake his hand. This had become one of the oddest features of the Clinton dynamic: the left wing of the Democratic Party, which had suffered through his various ideological heresies, was never so supportive of the President as when he was involved in a scandal. "What kept us close to the President was the Republicans," Senator Charles Schumer, of New York, who was still a member of the House in 1998, says. "Their extreme nastiness pushed Democrats into Bill Clinton's arms, even those who didn't like him very much."

The President opened that night with an impressive barrage of statistics: "We have more than fourteen million new jobs; the lowest unemployment in twenty-four years; the lowest core inflation in thirty years; incomes are rising; and we have the highest home ownership in history. Crime has dropped for a record five years in a row. And the welfare rolls are at their lowest levels in twenty-seven years. Our leadership in the world is unrivalled. Ladies and gentlemen"—he paused, slowing down for the ritual pronouncement—"the state of our union is strong."

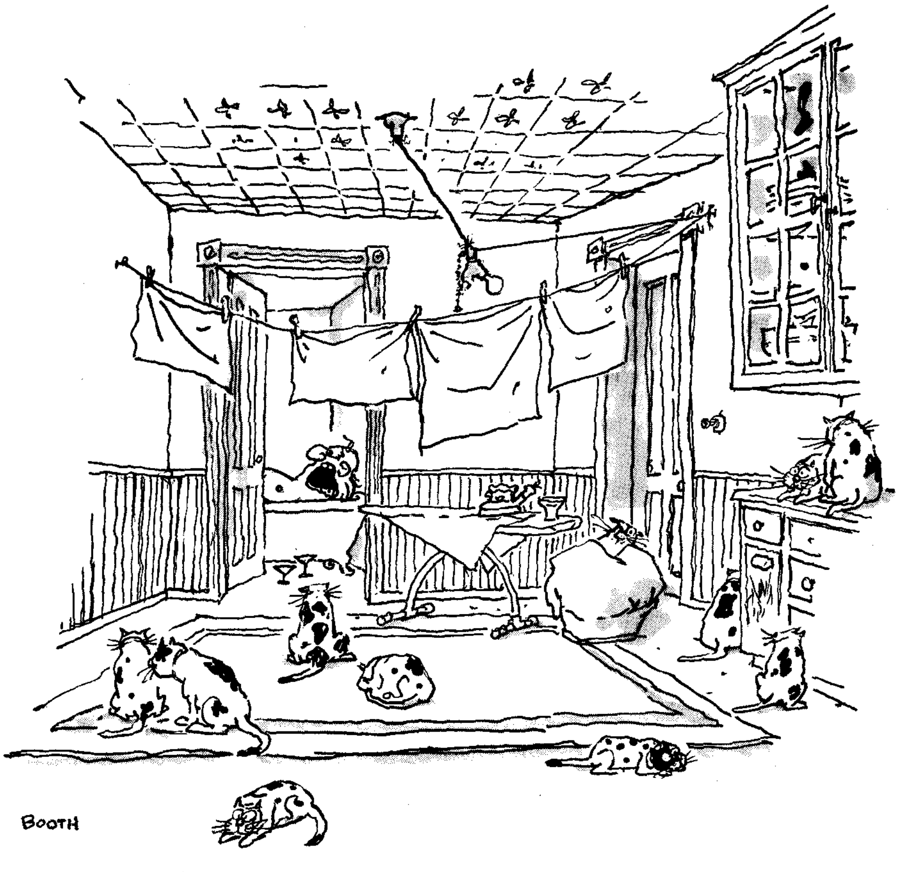
He lowered his voice on "strong," delivering it like a hammer blow rather than a trumpet clarion. Now he moved on to his statement of creed: "Rarely have Americans lived through so much change, in so many ways, in so short a time. . . . We have moved into an Information Age, a global economy, a truly new world.

"For five years now we have met the challenge of these changes at every turning point. . . . We have moved past the sterile debate between those who say government is the enemy and those who say government is the answer. My fellow-Americans, we have found a Third Way. We have the smallest government in thirty-five years, but a more progressive one. We have a smaller government, but a stronger nation." He was interrupted here by ironic applause from the Republicans, but he pressed on, reciting the three principles of the Third Way: opportunity, responsibility, and community—words that Clinton had made the slogan of the moderate Democratic Leadership Council when he became its chairman, in 1990. Then, he made a last attempt to summarize his governing philosophy, a three-point "strategy for prosperity: fiscal discipline to cut interest rates and spur growth; investments in education and skills . . . to prepare our people for the new economy; new markets for American products and American workers."

There was no applause. His effort to explain his larger purpose had fallen flat again. The next paragraph, however, brought bipartisan cheers: "For three decades, six Presidents have come before you to warn of the damage deficits pose to our nation. Tonight, I come before you to announce that the federal deficit—once so incomprehensibly large that it had eleven zeros—will be, simply, zero." Then he took the big gamble: "If we balance the budget for next year, it is projected that we'll then have a sizable surplus in the years that immediately follow. What should we do with this projected surplus?" The President paused. "I have a simple, four-word answer: Save Social Security first."

The Democrats were up out of their seats with a roar. Newt Gingrich, who sat behind the President in the Speaker's chair, was applauding, too, but reluctantly, and he was still seated. Slowly, Gingrich seemed to understand that he had been snookered yet again—that the nation would see Democrats vigorously supporting the most popular federal program, Social Security, while the Republicans were still seated, glumly—and he hauled himself to his feet and joined in a standing ovation for the President of the United States. "It was, to my mind, the most incredible moment of this Presidency," Michael Waldman, the speechwriter, recalled. "Not so much because Clinton had managed to outthink and outflank the Republicans in the midst of the Lewinsky scandal but because in that moment you could just see one trillion dollars moving from their side of the ledger to ours, from tax cuts to Social Security."

"What I got credit for there was just getting up and standing there," Bill Clinton recalled two and a half years later, toward the end of the first of two extensive conversations we had during his last summer in office. The President reminisced about his eight years in the White House, and he was eager to make a case for the successes of his Administration, of course; but he was also quite candid, at times, about his substantive failures. He was wistful about opportunities lost, infuriated—at himself, but mostly at his unrelenting enemies—because of the time wasted in scandals. The meaning of his Administration had been obscured. "I'm not



"If pressured, I will run!"

sure," he said, "that I ever took full advantage of the opportunity to lay the coherent philosophy out."

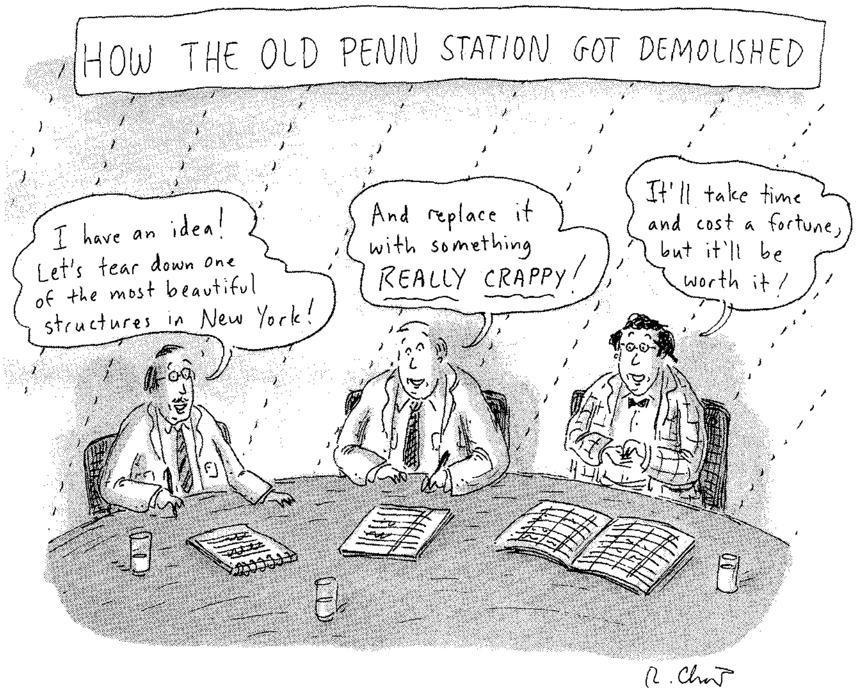
Our first conversation was oddly formal. We sat at a glass café table in a small room that seemed an afterthought in a styleless New York hotel suite. (The President was in town for a speech.) Clinton was wearing a dark-blue suit, a red tie, and a white shirt. He was more reserved, less restless, than I'd ever seen him. He remained seated for more than two hours, never removed his jacket and never raised his voice, even when he was excited or annoyed by a question. After an hour of talking, he asked a steward for a cup of decaffeinated coffee and a glass of water. He didn't offer me anything to drink; indeed, he didn't make much of an effort to charm me. He rarely laughed, or even smiled, although he did loosen up a bit when I asked if there was a moment in 1998, the Lewinsky year, when it suddenly became clear to him that the economy was zooming and that all of his first-term policy gambles—deficit reduction, welfare reform, support for free trade—were paying off. "Was there a bolt of lightning?" I asked.

"Well, I spent a lot of 1998 trying to dodge bolts of lightning," Clinton said with a laugh, stretching out his long legs. "I spent a lot of '98 wrestling with three overwhelming feelings. There was obviously a lot of pain involved, because I had made a terrible personal mistake which I didn't try to correct until almost a year later—and I had to live with it, and it caused an enormous amount of pain to my family, to my Administration, to the country. And then I had to deal with what the Republicans wanted to do with it. I really believed I was defending the Constitution. . . . I still believe that two of the great achievements of my Administration were facing down the government shutdowns in '95 and '96, and then facing this." He didn't use the word impeachment. "Those two things together essentially ended the most overt and extreme manifestations of the Gingrich revolution."

The President sat back and smiled. "And the third thing I felt that year was, 'Gosh, it's all working! It's all coming together.' . . . I was really happy. I was happy because I thought—to be fair, I don't think any of us ever thought in '93 that the economy would take off this way."

POLITICAL SONAR

I've known Bill Clinton since the late eighties; our relationship was quite good at first; and then very bad, and, finally, not so bad again. I'd written favorably about him when he ran for President in 1992, and then I'd written unfavorably about him as he seemed to flounder through the first few years of his Presidency. In 1996, I published, anonymously, a novel called "Primary Colors," which many people considered—incorrectly, to my mind—an attack on the President. (I saw it more as a paean to political roguery.) In any event, Clinton by that time seemed immune to critical assault. He had zigzagged so deftly across a brutal political landscape that ideological quibbles appeared foolish; political opponents were astounded by his buoyancy. His effulgent appetites seemed an almost comic exaggeration of the trials and temptations that afflicted his generation. To judge from his consistently high approval ratings in the polls, the public appeared to tolerate—and, perhaps, secretly enjoy—these unruly passions.


HOW THE OLD PENN STATION GOT DEMOLISHED
I have an idea! Let's tear down one of the most beautiful structures in New York!
And replace it with something REALLY CRAPPY!
It'll take time and cost a fortune, but it'll be worth it!
R. Chast

I first met Bill Clinton at a meeting of the Democratic Leadership Council in Philadelphia, soon after the inauguration of George H. W. Bush. We were introduced by Al From, the president of the D.L.C., who hooked a thumb in Clinton's direction and said, "This guy delivers our message better than any other politician."

The Democratic Leadership Council had been formed, in 1985, as a moderate, mostly Southern response to the leftward rush—and attendant electoral failures—of the Democratic Party since the sixties, and its message remained a work in progress. There was skepticism among mainstream Democrats about the D.L.C., whose early meetings were notable mainly for the number of corporate lobbyists in attendance. The group was derided as the "Southern white boys" or, in Jesse Jackson's phrase, "Democrats for the leisure class." The inference was that these were Democrats uncomfortable with the moral decision their party had made to embrace the civil-rights and antiwar movements in the sixties, even as the Republicans had successfully launched a "Southern strategy" of cultivating the region's white majority. (The Democrats had lost the South in every Presidential campaign since 1964—except for Jimmy Carter's 1976 victory—and, with the advent of Ronald Reagan, they had begun to lose the white blue-collar vote in the rest of the country as well.)

By the mid-eighties, the Democrats seemed permanently boggled. The moderates in the Party were held hostage by an aurora of interest groups (feminists, minorities, environmentalists, the academic left) who seemed more concerned with the purity of their causes than with winning elections. There was an intellectual sclerosis as well. The more vocal activists on the left tended to blame "society"—that is, the free-market system—for the rapidly rising crime rate and for a relatively new, stubbornly persistent form of intergenerational poverty, which was marked by out-of-wedlock births and welfare dependency. There was a near-absolute belief in the immorality of almost every form of American military activity abroad. Finally, at a time when government had lost credibility and was beset by enormous deficits, the Democrats were, proudly, the party of government. "We're the party of teachers," a frustrated Al From said at the end of the futile Dukakis campaign for the Presidency, in 1988, "when we should be the party of education."

There was a yearning among many Democrats, even non-Southerners, for a less precious party. The conservatives, who had built think tanks like the Heritage Foundation, now seemed more intellectually supple than many traditional liberals did. Al From longed for an aggressive, Heritage-style effort to generate new ideas and, in 1989, he started the Progressive Policy Institute. This turned out to be the second most important decision he made that year; the first was to try to recruit Bill Clinton to become the chairman of the D.L.C.

"I've got a big decision to make," Clinton told him, after months of dithering. "I've got to decide whether I'm going to run for governor again. If I don't do it, I'm going to have to figure out some way to make a hundred thousand dollars a year to support my family."

"I said to him, 'You stupid son of a bitch, I'll pay you a hundred thousand dollars right now to be chairman of the D.L.C.,' " From later told me. "That's why I never believed he was money-corrupt during the Whitewater business—the guy had no sense of his own worth."

In time, Clinton chose to do both: he ran for reëlection as governor and became chairman of the D.L.C. (without pay). But one sensed a reluctance on Clinton's part to identify himself so clearly with one wing of the Democratic Party. "Bill Clinton operates by sonar," Robert Reich concluded after thirty years of friendship with the President and four years as his Secretary of Labor. "He emits a huge number of policies, ideas, and initiatives and he sees what kind of response he gets. And where he sees an opportunity to move, he moves."

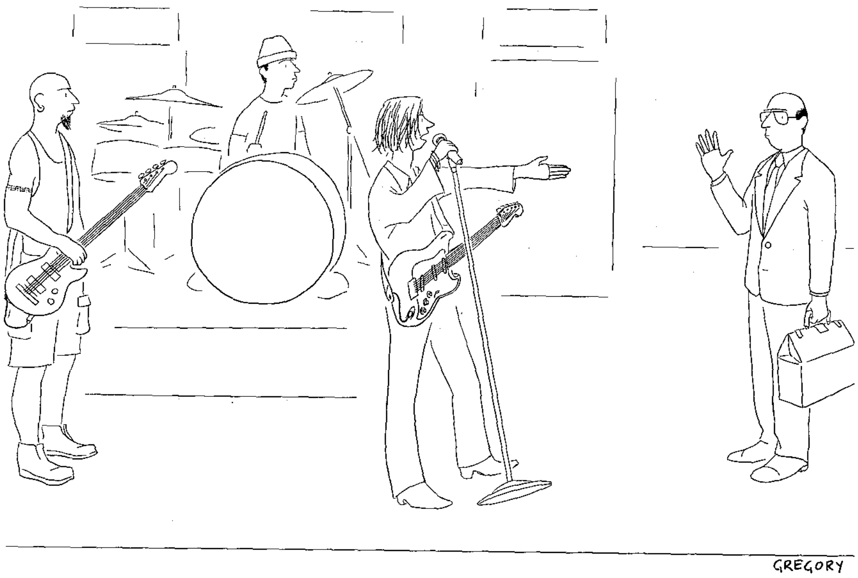
In the political sonar of the nineties, pings were coming from the middle of the spectrum. At times, Clinton would lean left, but he almost always leaned back to the center. Over the years, there would be debates about the precise location of his heart: was he tempted left because that was where his true faith lay, or because the political calculus occasionally demanded that he keep the Party stalwarts happy, or because of other pressures—from his wife, from the people who raised money for the Party, from the Hollywood liberals whose approval he so clearly enjoyed? Even Al From sometimes wondered if Bill Clinton had hooked up with the New Democrats merely because their message polled so well. "That's true," From says now, "but from the start, when it counted, Bill Clinton was always with us on the issues, especially big ones like day care."

Although the battle over day-care assistance is remembered now only by the most hopeless of policy wonks, in the late eighties it represented the purest example of the philosophical difference between "old" and "new" Democrats, and it remains, to this day, the only policy issue on which Bill and Hillary Clinton have taken opposing positions in public. Mrs. Clinton stood with her friend Marian Wright Edelman, of the Children's Defense Fund, and with most congressional Democrats in support of the A.B.C. bill, a classic piece of liberal legislation to establish day-care centers for the working poor, with licensed operators and guaranteed standards. Conservatives were, simply, opposed: they called the plan "government babysitting." The National Governors' Association, led by the Governor of Arkansas, proposed a third way, to coin a phrase: a bill that would give a tax credit (in effect, a voucher) to poor people in need of day care, which would let them spend the money wherever they wanted. The result was complicated, but the governors essentially won their case.

This was the beginning of a furiously creative moment in domestic policymaking. The Progressive Policy Institute challenged Democratic Party orthodoxy in its very first position paper: an argument *against* a higher minimum wage and in favor of an expanded earned-income tax credit. (The latter, a reverse income tax of sorts, gave money directly to the working poor—the same principle as the day-care tax credit.) Many of the ideas that Bill Clinton ran on and then tried to implement, from welfare reform and national service to job-training vouchers, were hatched by the Progressive Policy Institute during this period.

The political spectrum seemed, suddenly, an arrow—with moderates pointing the way to the future and the traditional left and right wings lagging behind. The academics who populated the P.P.I. were open to any and all creative heresies—even the ultimate heresy, communing with Republicans. A series of monthly dinners was organized by a P.P.I. fellow named Elaine Kamarck (who later became Al Gore's policy director) and James Pinkerton, a junior domestic-policy adviser in the White House who seemed to be working the same intellectual turf as the New Democrats. "The two things we learned in the eighties were entirely contradictory," Pinkerton said. "Socialism doesn't work. And the most ideological President of the twentieth century, Ronald Reagan, couldn't put an end to the welfare state."

Thus, the job of these radical centrists was to create a welfare state for the Information Age, one that acknowledged that government was necessary but that it might act more efficiently if it took advantage of market disciplines, like competition. Clinton was more cautious than the P.P.I. in his advocacy of the New Whatever. But, oh, could he talk policy! He rhapsodized about the competitive bidding for sanitation contracts in Phoenix, the public-housing manager in Omaha who'd come up with a great after-school program for the kids in the projects, the terrific private welfare-to-work program in New York. But Clinton also understood the meaner calculations that a Democrat would have to make if he wanted to be elected President: he would have to seem tougher on crime than Michael Dukakis had, especially on the squalid, and substantively irrelevant, issue of the death penalty; he would have to be something more than a pacifist when it came to foreign policy (although Clinton's position on the Senate's vote to authorize the Gulf War had been a hilarious fudge: "I guess I would have voted



"We've got Tom O'Brien on bass, Nick Weber on drums, and Jonah Petchesky on contracts."

• •

with the majority if it was a close vote, but I agree with the arguments the minority made"); he would have to walk a narrow passage on social issues (pro gay rights, but not pro gay marriage; pro affirmative action, but anti-quotas); he would have to seem more concerned with the problems of the "forgotten" middle class than with those of the poor.

All these pieces were in place when the Democratic Leadership Council held its annual convention, in Cleveland, in early May of 1991. A bland processional of Democratic Presidential hopefuls—Al Gore, Richard Gephardt, Jay Rockefeller, among others—was scheduled; a large national press contingent was there to rate the contestants. Clinton was the first to speak.

He did not have a prepared text but riffed from twenty-one single-word cues that he'd scrawled on a piece of paper. At a key moment in the speech, he asked a rhetorical question: Why had the Democrats failed to win middle-class votes? "I'll tell you why: because too many of the people that used to vote for us, the very burdened middle class we are talking about, have not trusted us in national elections to defend our national interests abroad, to put their values into our social policy at home, or to take their tax money and spend it with discipline."

And then he uttered for the first time a now famous formula: "Our burden is to give the people a new choice, rooted in old values, a new choice that is simple, that offers opportunity, demands responsibility, gives citizens more say, provides them responsive government—all because we recognize that we are a community, we are all in this together, and we are going up or down together."

Al From had never heard the message synthesized so cogently before; the press proclaimed Clinton the best of the Cleveland orators. But Mario Cuomo, who had not appeared, was the presumed Democratic front-runner; and George Bush was still enjoying historic popularity after the Gulf War. Two days after the speech—on May 8, 1991—Clinton was back in Little Rock, attending an industrial-promotion meeting at a local hotel, and very far from the Presidency of the United States. A state employee working at the reception caught his eye. According to subsequent testimony, the Governor of Arkansas asked a trooper named Danny Ferguson to go over and see if the young woman, whose name was Paula Corbin (later Jones), would like to meet with him privately upstairs.

It was one thing to hear Bill Clinton talk about policy; it was quite another to watch him actually campaign for the Presidency. There was a physical, almost carnal quality to his public appearances. He embraced audiences and was aroused by them in turn—the seduction was mutual. There was a needy, melodramatic, high-cholesterol quality to it all, but people seemed to accept his vast, messy humanity. Try as he might to keep in shape—jogging for miles, his pale thighs jiggling—he still tended toward a pink fleshiness. He was addicted to junk food. He had a reputation as a womanizer. All these qualities were of a piece. The news that he'd been fooling around with an Arkansas lounge singer named Gennifer Flowers, which appeared in a supermarket tabloid a few weeks before the New Hampshire primary, seemed redundant; it was only when that peccadillo was compounded by a second scandal—he was caught lying about his determined efforts to avoid the military draft during the war in Vietnam—that his poll numbers began to drop. Even then, the damage was temporary.

On the night before the New Hampshire primary, well after his last scheduled public appearance, I found Clinton going from table to table at a local restaurant, shaking hands, chatting with anyone who would engage him. He restaurant-hopped through the dinner hour and then made a tour of the bowling alleys of Manchester—until just past midnight, when there were no more places to go except back to the hotel. He was exhausted and flu-ridden; his face was flushed, his eyes were red and bleary, but he wasn't quite ready to pack it in. "You want to bowl a game?" he asked.

If I remember correctly, Clinton bowled in his stocking feet, his white shirttail hanging out. At times, as we stood there, waiting for our balls to return down the alley, he'd lean up against me, a strange, feline sensation: he needed the physical contact.

The Clinton campaign appeared to exist entirely within the grammar of popular culture—a cross between a disaster movie and a country-music song. The Governor roused his languishing candidacy by playing the saxophone on the Arsenio Hall program; he distanced himself from Jesse Jackson by attacking a rap singer named Sister Souljah; his wife quoted Tammy Wynette. His staff called him Elvis. He travelled by bus. And the distant, patrician President, George Bush, provided a perfect foil.

But there was also a touching, uncynical transparency to the campaign: the candidate actually seemed moved by the stories he heard, and the stories, more often than not, fit his vision of the challenge ahead. People—factory workers, middle managers, the folks who populated the McDonald's he visited—really were frightened about the future: would there be a place for them in the new global economy? James Carville's famous sign—"It's the economy, stupid"—was posted to keep the campaign staff focussed. The candidate needed no such reminder.

The campaign reached its climax in the second Presidential debate, on October 15, 1992, in Richmond, Virginia—a town meeting that included spontaneous questions from the audience. The candidates sat on high stools, were given wireless mikes, and were able to wander around. About halfway through the debate, an African-American woman asked a confusing question: "How has the national debt personally affected each of your lives? And if it hasn't, how can you honestly find a cure for the economic problems of the common people if you have no experience in what's ailing them?"

> Bush: I'm sure it has. I love my grandchildren. . . . I'm not sure I get—help me with the question and I'll try to answer it.
>
> Q: Well, I've had friends that have been laid off from jobs.
>
> Moderator: I think she means more the recession . . . rather than the deficit.
>
> Bush: Well, listen, you ought to be in the White House for a day and hear what I hear. . . . I was in the Lomax A.M.E. Church. It's a black church just outside of Washington, D.C. And I read in the bulletin about teen-age pregnancies, about the difficulties families are having to make ends meet . . .

After more such struggle, it was Clinton's turn, and he did something quite extraordinary. He took three steps toward the woman and said, "Tell me how it's affected you again?"

The woman was speechless. Clinton helped her along, describing some of the terrible economic stories he'd heard as governor of Arkansas. The Presidential campaign was, in effect, over.

ANARCHY

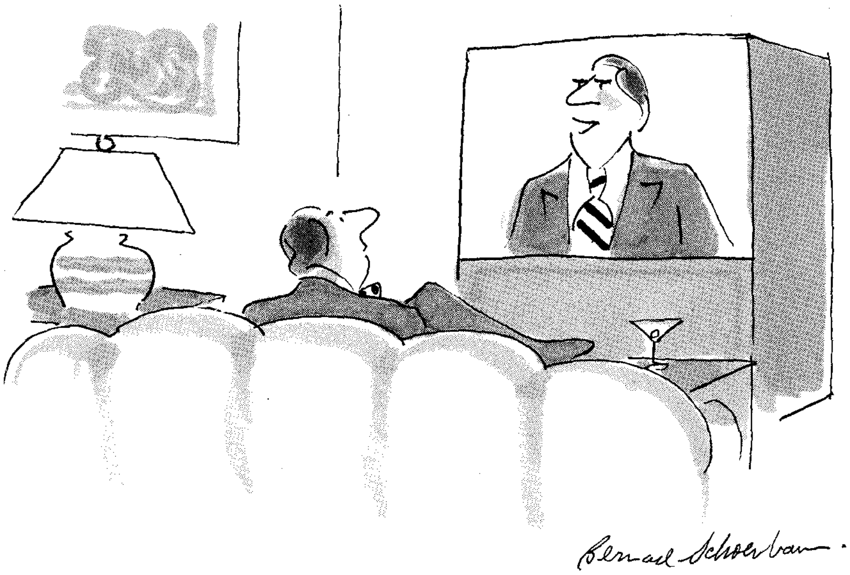
In his first television interview after the election, Bill Clinton told Ted Koppel, of ABC, that he was going to "focus like a laser beam on this economy." The economy did become his priority, but the public saw a different picture: chaos. Clinton's transition from candidate to President is considered by many historians, and by more than a few of the staff members who suffered through it, the worst in modern history. He was exhausted from the campaign but refused to take a vacation, and, in his very first press conference as President-elect, on November 11, 1992, he made a serious mistake. Asked if he would stand by his pledge to allow homosexuals to serve openly in the military, Clinton said yes. (A more politic, and Clintonian, response would have been "Yes, we're going to ask the military to study the situation and come up with a plan"—sometime in the very, very distant future.)

"It sent precisely the wrong message," one of Clinton's campaign advisers says. "I'm not saying he shouldn't have taken that position. But as the first thing he did? It was exactly the sort of 'liberal élitist' issue that we'd been trying to submerge throughout the campaign. It sent the signal that he was going to govern differently from the way he campaigned—as an 'old' Democrat."

Other disturbing signals followed. Clinton, a crossword-puzzle addict, spent most of November and December working out a Cabinet that "looked like America," perfectly balanced—at least, according to traditional liberal perceptions—along racial, ethnic, and gender lines. This was silly on several grounds. In the modern Presidency, the real power resides in the White House staff; all but a few Cabinet members are peripheral. Clinton seemed more preoccupied with the need for a second Hispanic (Federico Pena, the former mayor of Denver, displaced William Daley as Transportation Secretary at the last moment) and with the search for a woman to be Attorney General—which produced the uninspiring but apparently eternal Janet Reno—than with working out a coherent management structure for the West Wing. It was two years before the White House was put in order.

There was, however, one aspect of the operation that was professional: the formulation of a budget proposal, which had to be presented within weeks of the Inauguration. "He knew that deficit reduction was the predicate, that we couldn't have a credible activist government unless we could get the budget under control," Hillary Clinton told me in a recent interview. "I compare it to the importance of education in Arkansas. We couldn't get the economy moving there unless more people had the skills necessary for better jobs. In 1993, our most important job was dealing with 'Stockman's revenge'—which I think was Daniel Patrick Moynihan's term for the massive deficits that the Reagan tax cuts and defense buildup had created." Mrs. Clinton concluded, "Unless we dealt with the deficits first, we'd never be able to do any of the other things we wanted to do."

The President didn't appear quite so purposeful at the time. He bellowed and thrashed, frustrated by the constraints of



"And, if elected, I will take the money out of politics and put it into a portfolio of high-yielding instruments."

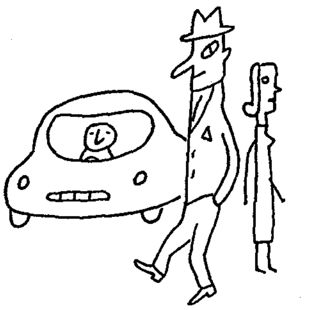
the process; there were so many programs that he had hoped to deliver and could not afford. The staff was split on deficit reduction, but the outcome was never really in question: Clinton's position was implicit in his selection of an economic team. The conservative Texas Senator Lloyd Bentsen was his Treasury Secretary; Leon Panetta, of California, the chairman of the House Budget Committee, was the director of the Office of Management and Budget; and Clinton created a new structure—the National Economic Council, led by Robert Rubin—to coördinate all the aspects of economic policy. These were the three strongest voices in the budget discussions, and each was a "deficit hawk"—determined to substantially reduce what was, that year, a federal budget deficit of $290 billion.

The President's campaign consultants, who tended to be populists, were perplexed by Clinton's sudden emphasis on fiscal conservatism. They pointed out that George Bush had broken his "no new taxes" pledge to support a similar plan in 1990. The editorial pages had cheered Bush's courage, but there had been no appreciable impact on the economy (or on the federal deficit, which continued to grow); Bush had split his party and lost the election. Now the bond market was demanding that Clinton do the same. It was known—mysteriously but conclusively—that Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, would consider "credible" only a package that included five hundred billion dollars' worth of deficit reduction, projected over five years. Traditional Keynesians could argue that this sort of reduction in government spending might push the economy into another recession. But Clinton had made his choice. "I believed there were vast flows of venture capital—confidence capital—that were out there bursting and waiting to happen," the President told me. "There was this huge, vast, pent-up potential in the American economy. . . . If I didn't get the economy going, nothing else would matter in the end."

In the end, the budget battle revealed two of the larger themes of the Clinton Presidency. The first was a new, highly toxic level of political partisanship in Washington. Early in 1993, there was the stunning news that not one Republican, in either house of Congress, would vote for the President's plan. Leon Panetta delivered the message to the Oval Office after a conversation with his old friend Senator Pete Domenici, of New Mexico, the ranking Republican on the Senate Budget Committee. "Leon," Domenici said, "we've been told by the leadership that we just can't support anything with a tax increase in it." Suddenly, the most basic act of governance—preparing a budget—had become a struggle that would consume much of the new President's first year in office. The rest of the Clinton agenda, especially the First Lady's health-insurance plan, was crippled before it could even be proposed.

"Maybe there were some things I could have done," Clinton lamented to me this summer. He might have reached out more aggressively to the Republican leaders, Senator Bob Dole and Representative Bob Michel, both moderates with a history of finding ways to compromise. He might also have been less solicitous toward the leading Democrats, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and House Speaker Tom Foley, whom he invited to Little Rock for dinner within days after the election (along with the antique but powerful Senator Robert Byrd, of West Virginia). The Democrats were not pleased with some of the reforms that Clinton had proposed as a candidate—smaller congressional staffs, a line-item veto, campaign-finance reform—and the new President, mindful that Jimmy Carter had foundered after he defied the Democratic leaders of Congress, quickly agreed to abandon them.

As a result of these tactical retreats, Clinton developed a reputation in Washington for being uncertain and malleable. His decision to abandon the B.T.U. tax—a complicated energy levy, championed by Vice-President Gore—after a great many House Democrats had voted for it did long-term damage to his reputation in Congress. And yet those who participated in the lengthy White House budget meetings knew there were lines that Clinton simply would not cross, promises he wouldn't abandon.



This was the second, albeit submerged, lesson of the budget battle: Clinton could be laughably flexible, to the point of changing his position entirely on issues he considered peripheral—the B.T.U. tax, campaign-finance reform. He was, however, willing to spend political capital on issues others considered abstract or obscure but which were integral to his governing vision.

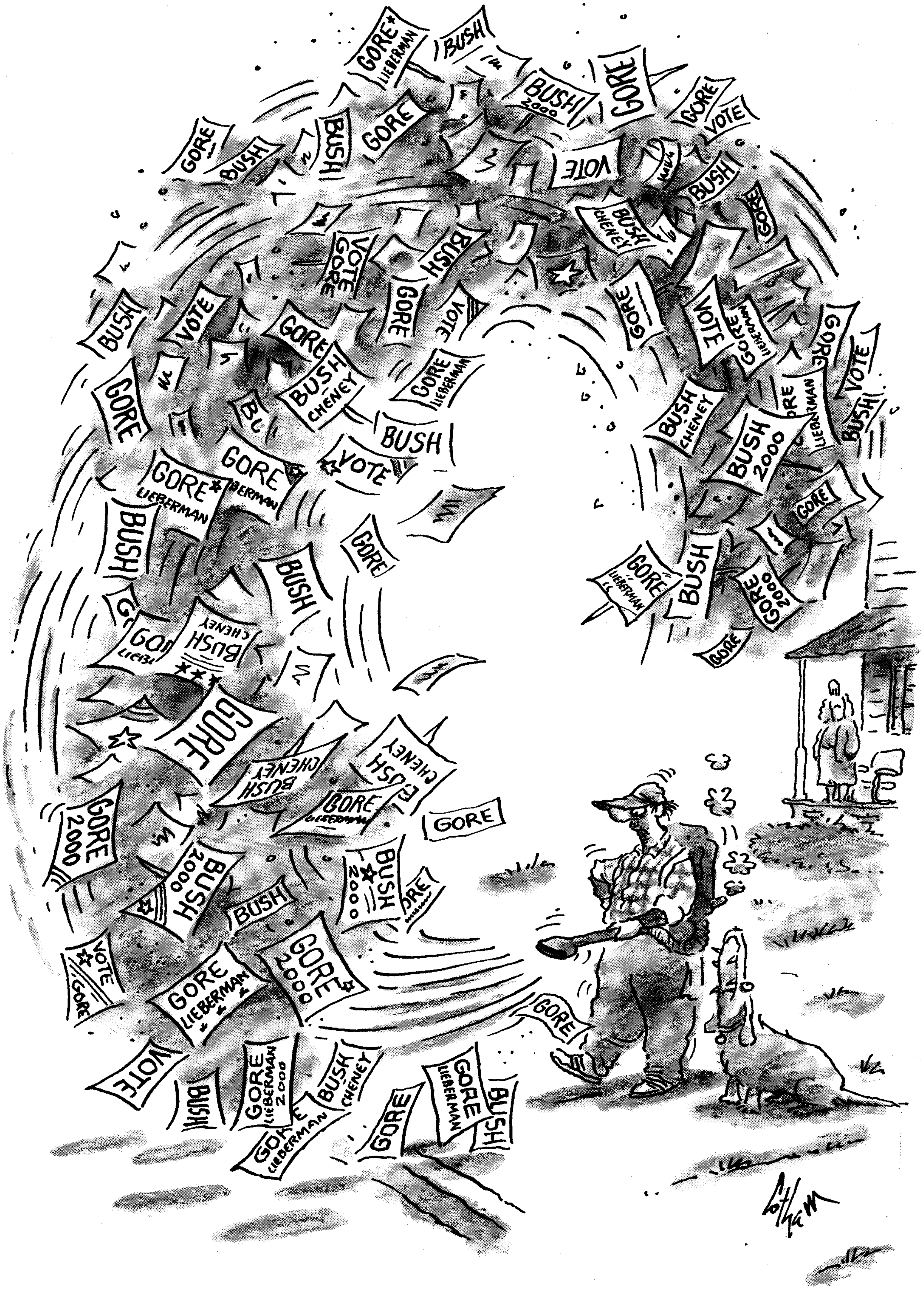
Two campaign proposals, both distinctive New Democrat ideas, were sacrosanct during the budget-cutting. Clinton insisted on funding for AmeriCorps, the national-service proposal that had been the best applause line of his Presidential campaign. He also insisted on expanding the earned-income tax credit, making good on another promise: "No one should have to work forty hours a week and raise a family in poverty."

Lloyd Bentsen noted that Clinton could eliminate the four-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax (which had replaced the B.T.U. tax) and still achieve the magic five-hundred-billion-dollar figure, if he scaled back the earned-income tax credit. The politics of this were obvious: the Republicans could point to the gasoline tax and say that Clinton had raised taxes on the middle class, after promising to lower them. Furthermore, no one would notice if those who benefitted from the earned-income tax credit—the legions of waitresses, hospital orderlies, and janitors—still toiled for wages that left them below the poverty line; the subsidy was too cumbersome a concept for most journalists to even attempt to describe.

Bentsen was the most senior, and the most respected, man in the room, but he was opposed by George Stephanopoulos and also by Gene Sperling, a diminutive, devoted, and seriously junior economic aide. At one point, the unlikely sparring between Sperling and Bentsen became so intense that Roger Altman, the Deputy Treasury Secretary, said, "Why don't we let Gene and Lloyd take it outside?"

"Because," the President said, with a laugh, "pretty soon folks would be saying, 'What ever happened to old Gene?' "

But Clinton sided with old Gene. He

GORE + LIEBERMAN
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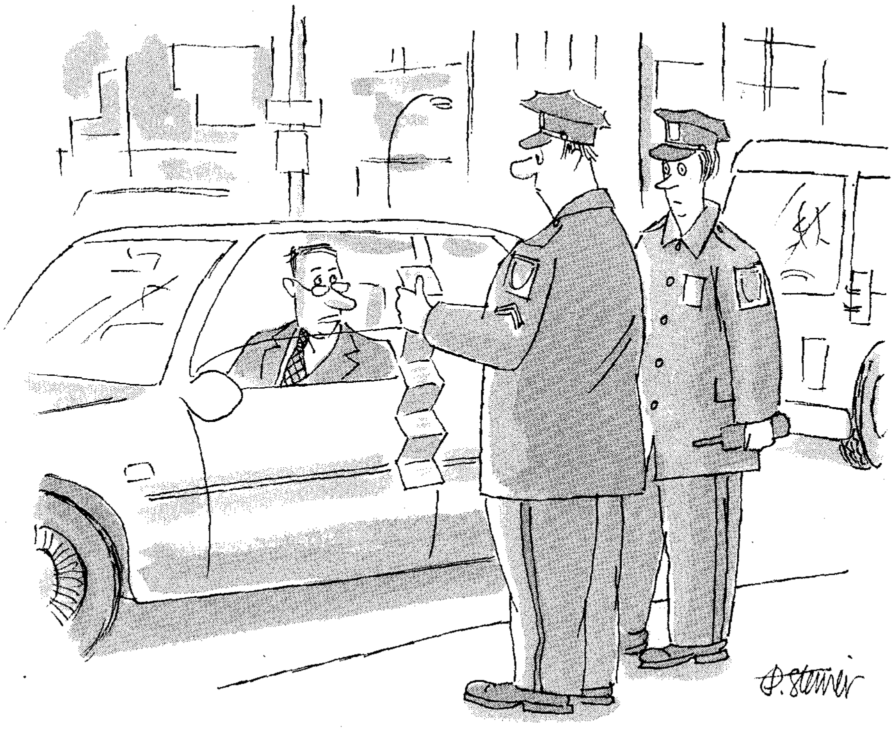
expanded the earned-income tax credit by twenty-one billion dollars over five years, which, in effect, increased incomes for fifteen million families, all of whom earned less than twenty-seven thousand dollars a year. "Here we were, all these brilliant spinners," Stephanopoulos said later, "and none of us figured out, until months later, that we had actually passed a middle-class tax cut: it was the earned-income tax credit."

Bill Clinton had bet his future on the abstraction of smaller deficits. There is the temptation, given the success of the policy, to undervalue the courage of that decision. A less serious politician might have behaved differently, might have tried to make himself popular by proposing a big tax cut or an old-fashioned liberal spending program, knowing that neither was possible. (Clinton did make a futile, half-hearted effort to enact a small economic-stimulus package.) But, for a reputed slickster, Clinton proved, this time and often again, surprisingly uncynical. Soon he would spend even more political capital on another abstraction: the cause of free trade, the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, which was opposed by a majority of the Democratic House members who had just taken a political risk to support his budget plan. By any fair accounting, he was running a very earnest Presidency, and yet his Administration, as portrayed by the media and perceived by the political community in Washington, seemed trivial, juvenile, a circus.

The disorganization of the Clinton White House was soon infamous. Lloyd Bentsen called Clinton "the meetingest fellow I know." The daily schedule was fluid, to say the least. Meetings were interminable, often inconclusive, and open to almost anyone on the staff who happened to walk in. One weekend in the spring, there was a seven-hour meeting on Bosnia that resulted in no significant policy action. There were similar seminars on health care and on other topics, and there were the constant, ever-shifting anxieties of the budget fight. One day, William Galston—a Progressive Policy Institute adviser who had joined Clinton's domestic-policy staff—actually walked out of one of his rare meetings with the President, which had been delayed for two hours, after passing a note to Clinton's chief of staff, Thomas (Mack) McLarty: "I promised my son I'd go to his Little League game."

Senators John McCain and Bob Kerrey would never forget their first visit to the Clinton White House to discuss normalization of relations with Vietnam. They had to wait forty-five minutes for the meeting to begin, and then Clinton, who seemed intensely interested in their feelings about the war, was distracted by young aides who moved in and out, passing notes, whispering in the President's ear, and, worse, chatting among themselves. Kerrey later told me he wanted to take George Stephanopoulos by the lapels and say, "Listen, kid, you're in the presence of the President of the United States! Show some respect!"



"These are my conservative credentials."

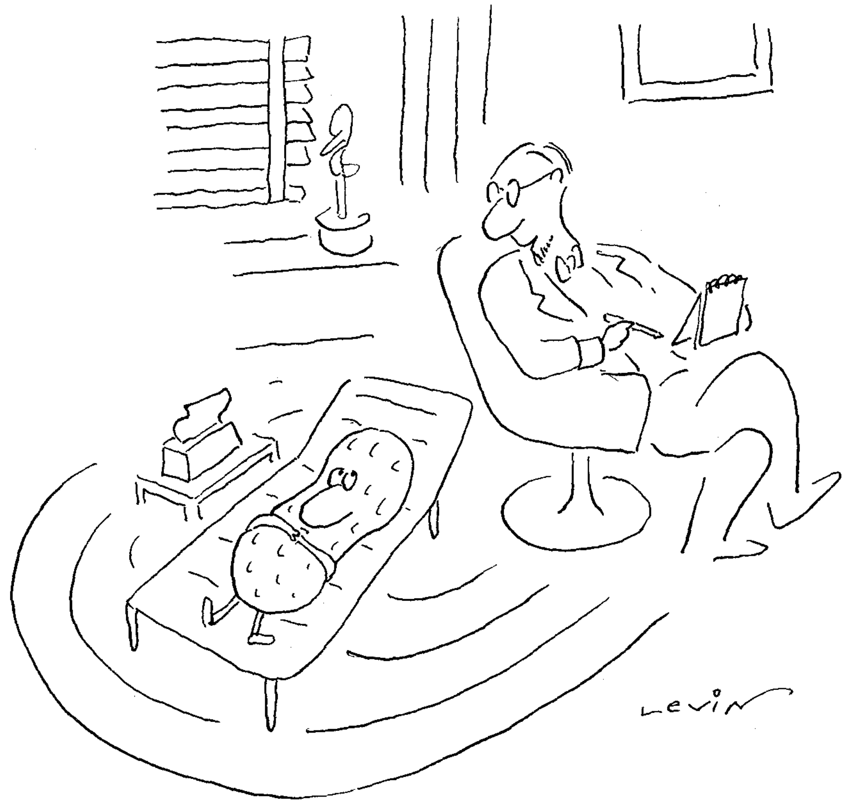
Stephanopoulos, the public face of the Administration's perceived callowness, was thirty years old when he joined the campaign staff, one of the first people Clinton hired. Previously, he had worked for Richard Gephardt, the House Majority Leader, and he reflected Gephardt's liberal Midwestern populism. Stephanopoulos was the most frequent object of the President's fleeting rages, but he was also a powerful presence during the first few years: the spiritual leader of the hardest workers in the White House, who tended to be younger, more accessible to the press (especially to Bob Woodward and the late Ann Devroy, of the Washington *Post*), and more liberal than the members of the economic team or, indeed, than the President himself. Stephanopoulos was a committed pessimist and a fierce partisan, and both attitudes seemed justified that first year: the Republicans were every bit as intransigent as he told Clinton they would be. Over time, Stephanopoulos's tactical sense of Congress proved to be his greatest strength, and also his greatest weakness, since it was accompanied by a straitened, legislative sense of the power of the Presidency. He seemed to stare down Pennsylvania Avenue through the wrong end of the telescope.

By late spring, with the budget battle far more difficult than had been anticipated, Clinton was indulging his most unattractive mood: a whiny self-pity, the tendency to blame others for his troubles. In May, the President suddenly decided to add to his staff a Republican, David Gergen, to help moderate his image, and, at the same time, he moved Stephanopoulos "inside" and made Dee Dee Myers the day-to-day press secretary. "The President told me that he was distressed by the fact that he was out of position," Gergen recalled. "He was perceived as being too far left."

Gergen, in fact, was more a member of the New Whatever party than an adherent of either of the traditional philosophies, but his arrival was seen as fresh evidence that Clinton didn't really believe in anything. Although Stephanopoulos himself was happy to be relieved of the daily press burden, the Stephanopoulite faction of the staff was enraged by Gergen's arrival and saw the newcomer as an alien implant to be rejected as quickly as possible, and he was: Gergen lasted just a year in the White House.

"I found Clinton's style of leadership very distressing at first," Gergen told me. "The Republican Presidents I'd served"—Nixon, Ford, and Reagan—"had a clear vision of where they were going, and their staffs reflected that. Clinton had all sorts of people at the table, all sorts of opinions—he had to hear from 'new' Democrats and 'old' Democrats, and feminists, and the union folks—and it offended my old-school sort of style. But I eventually realized that this was a new, postmodern style of leadership that was inevitable. In fact, I believe it's a reflection of the country's diversity. It's possible that all future Presidents will make their decisions in this way."

Clinton's management style wasn't as intentional as Gergen made it sound. It was a consequence of two character traits that bothered his aides: his inability to deliver bad news and his inability to make up his mind. Both helped sustain a murky Machiavellian atmosphere in the White House; there were circles within circles and constant conspiracies, often involving the First Lady, whose influence was overwhelming but rarely open. "A chipper President would arrive at the office in the morning," Gergen wrote in a recent memoir. "A phone would ring. It was a call from upstairs at the residence. He would listen, utter a few words, but as we started back to work, his mood would darken, his attention wander, and hot words would spew out. Had we seen the outrageous things his enemies were saying about him now? Why hadn't we attacked? Why was he working so hard and getting so little credit? Why was his staff screwing him again? *What*, I would wonder, had she said to him now?"



"First off, you're not a nut. You're a legume."

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THE GLOBALIST

By late summer of 1993, the intrigue within the White House had become particularly ugly. There was a battle for precedence among three separate domestic-policy operations—the President's economic team, the First Lady's health-insurance task force, and the Vice-President's reinventing-government effort—over how Clinton would divide his time in the fall. There was a sandbox intensity to the struggle; the enmity between the First Lady's staff and the Vice-President's was intense. Meanwhile, foreign policy had slipped down the President's list of priorities—an oversight that, arguably, cost the only American lives lost in battle during Bill Clinton's eight years in office.

The President was never as inept or as uninterested in diplomatic matters as his critics charged. But his interest was intermittent, and the world wasn't nearly as threatening as it once had been. Nettlesome problems like the civil unrest in Bosnia and Haiti seemed far less pressing than the daily struggle to secure enough votes to pass a budget. And Clinton's selection of a flaccid, almost purposefully obscure foreign-policy team seemed further evidence of his relative lack of interest.

Both Anthony Lake, the national-security adviser, and Warren Christopher, the Secretary of State, were intelligent and experienced; the Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, had been the most creative military strategist in Congress. But all three were uncomfortable in public, and it was hard to know if their discomfort was congenital or the consequence of serving an uncertain President. Lake found television news programs so distasteful that he generally refused to appear on them; Christopher would appear, but seemed practically moribund; Aspin also appeared, but seemed nervous. In private, the situation wasn't much different: all three men were curiously averse to recommending decisive Presidential action, especially in military affairs (to the dismay of Al Gore, who argued for a more aggressive policy, particularly in Bosnia). By contrast, General Colin Powell, then completing his term as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had no trouble expressing himself, and his views—on gays in the military, on Bosnia, on Somalia—tended to be dominant.

Powell's reluctance to recommend the use of military force is well known. His advice to the President on the situation in Somalia was an exception. The operation had begun—during the Bush Administration—as a humanitarian intervention, to alleviate a famine, but the multinational peacekeeping force, operating under the aegis of the United Nations, soon found itself using force to maintain order in the midst of local political anarchy. This gave the world a new military expression: "mission creep."

It seems clear that Bill Clinton was daunted by Colin Powell. Indeed, the President seemed jittery about military matters in general, a result, perhaps, of his avoidance of the draft. (Even his inability to salute correctly became a public issue.) On Somalia, Clinton told me, he had followed Powell's request for an aggressive effort to capture a local warlord, Mohammed Farah Aidid, after Pakistani peacekeepers were murdered. "And then Powell retired—he left the next week," Clinton said. "I'm not blaming him, I'm just saying he was gone. So what happened was we had this huge battle in broad daylight where hundreds and hundreds of Somalis were killed and we lost eighteen soldiers in what was a U.N. action. . . . I think I will always regret that—I don't know if I could have saved those lives or not . . . but I would have handled it in a different way if I'd had more experience. I know I would have."

The battle in Somalia occurred on October 3rd. Within a week, there was another blunder, in Haiti. An American ship, the U.S.S. Harlan County, was about to arrive in Port-au-Prince, carrying lightly armed forces whose purpose—agreed to in advance by the Haitian junta—was to "train" a civilian police force. But pistol-carrying emissaries of the junta appeared on the dock to prevent the ship's arrival. The loss of more American lives in a dubious cause seemed imminent; the ship was ordered not to dock. And then, after two days of lingering just outside the harbor, the Harlan County turned around and came home. "A total fuckup," Lake recalled. "We were double-crossed by General Cedras. But it was our fault. We had sent the ship out with zero military support."

Both Lake and Christopher offered to resign after these calamities, which was good internal politics; Aspin, less prompt with his tender, was the one who was asked to leave. He was supplanted by his deputy, William Perry, who was more competent but every bit as colorless as the others, and the Administration's uncertainty overseas, especially in the Balkans, continued to be an embarrassment. It wasn't until 1995, when the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Bosnia appeared to be collapsing, that the President was persuaded to take action, dispatching an aerial assault against the Serbs and also dispatching Richard Holbrooke, a diplomat whose aggressive, and ultimately successful, pursuit of a Bosnian peace stood in stark contrast to the Lake-Christopher diffidence.

Over time, Clinton's handling of foreign policy became less wobbly. He acted as an older brother to newcomers who reflected his political beliefs, like British Prime Minister Tony Blair (but he also had a particular affection for outsized old-timers like Boris Yeltsin and Helmut Kohl). He enjoyed hashing over common domestic dilemmas with them, and as more of his peers began to describe themselves as Third Way leaders their opponents took on a similar cast as well: trade-union conservatives on the left and religious extremists on the right.

The members of Clinton's second-term foreign-policy team—Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, National Security Adviser Samuel Berger, and a Republican, William Cohen, as Secretary of Defense—were considered less talented than their predecessors by the foreign-policy establishment, but they were also less constricted: under their watch, the President became much less restrained in his use of force, particularly his use of the cruise missile, which could be launched from great distances and with no risk to American lives. Clinton also became more active in mediating, if never quite solving, overseas disputes in the Middle East, in Africa, and in Northern Ireland. His policies toward Russia and China reflected a broad bipartisan consensus, encouraging democracy in Russia (while expanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization into the former Soviet satellites of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) and promoting free trade with China, in the hope that an expanding free market would create a more assertive Chinese middle class.

Eventually, Clinton visited more countries than any previous American President, but he remained too much of a politician—impatient, imprecise, not careful enough about the details—to be entirely successful as a diplomat. The most striking foreign-policy image of the Clinton Presidency, the awkward handshake between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat on the White House lawn (with the President behind them, shepherding them, arms outstretched), was illusory: the real work had taken place earlier, in Norway, without American involvement.

"There haven't been any major disasters, but you wonder if the seeds of future problems have been sown," Senator John McCain says, summarizing the most common criticism of Clinton's foreign policy. "He butterflies from issue to issue, and foreign policy just doesn't work that way. It has to be steady, concentrated, precise. He goes to Beijing and calls the Chinese our 'strategic partner.' Well, you wonder what the Japanese—who are our strategic partners in Asia—think about that. He 'wins ugly' in Kosovo by bombing from fifteen thousand feet, a policy I considered immoral, and then the Russians feel free to use the exact same policy in Chechnya."

McCain's point is both apt and incomplete. The difficult decisions, especially those that involved the use of force, did seem either rushed or belated—poorly planned and, in some cases (like the intermittent bombing of Iraq), dangerously inconclusive. But Clinton did have one undeniable foreign-policy achievement: he rearranged the traditional priorities, raising economic issues to the same level of importance as strategic affairs.

There is a subtle difference between "internationalism," which refers to the relations between nations, and "globalism," a more fluid Information Age concept, which presupposes the primacy of economic affairs; and Clinton was, arguably, the first globalist President. Certainly, he has been far more confident when it comes to the use of American economic power overseas—to preserve financial stability in Latin America and Asia, for example—than he has been on diplomatic or military issues. "This was something that struck me when I met Clinton, in 1991," Tony Lake recalled. "He kept saying, 'Foreign policy is domestic policy.' That was not an immediately attractive concept for someone like me, and it took more than a year to understand all the implications of it, but he was right."

Clinton assumed that economic globalization was inevitable. He also believed in the classical theory of free trade: lower tariffs would result in lower prices, more exports, and a stronger economy. "It's so wonderful when economic theory turns out to be right," Lawrence Summers, who succeeded Robert Rubin as Treasury Secretary, later said. "The economic benefits of the tariff reductions we negotiated over the past eight years represent the largest tax cut in the history of the world."

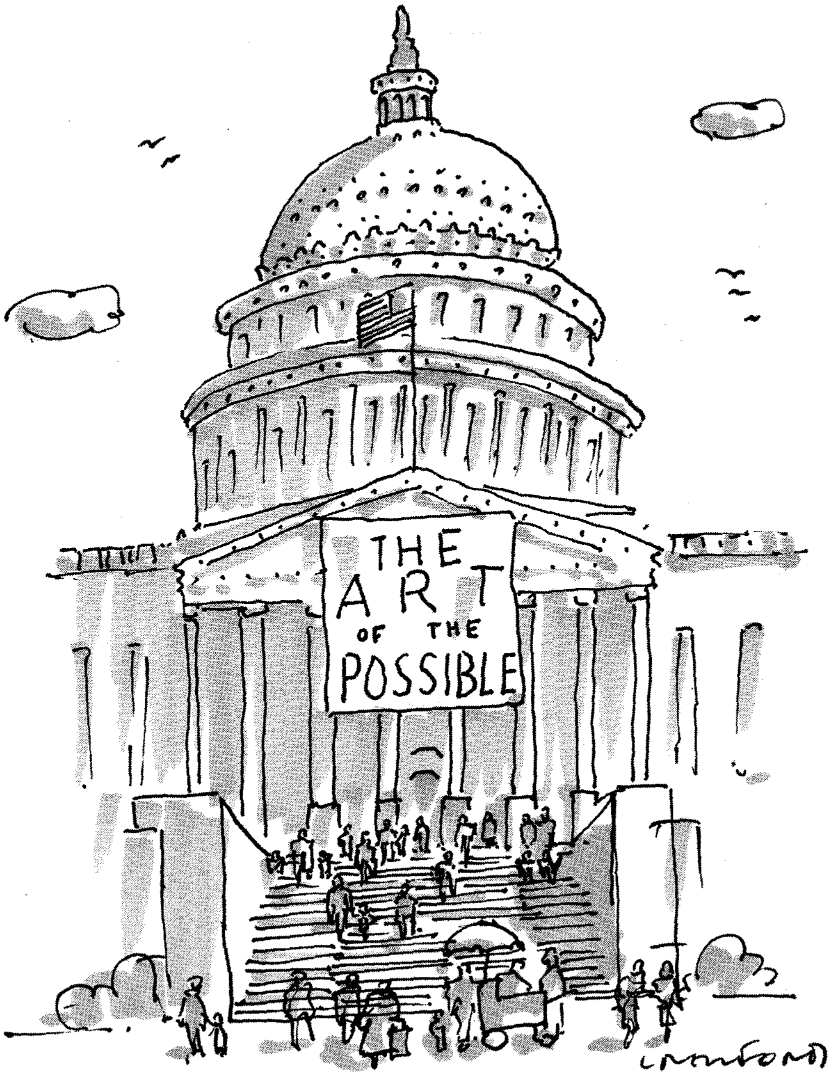
Summers was a Harvard economist; he paid no political price for his faith in the theory (nor, for that matter, did most Republicans). The President faced a more difficult political reality. The real but diffuse benefits of free trade were less obvious to working people than the specific jobs lost when factories moved to Mexico or Asia. Most Democrats, especially those in the House, shared this skepticism. In the autumn of 1993, so did the First Lady, who didn't really oppose the North American Free Trade Agreement but was afraid her health-insurance proposal would falter if it wasn't promoted exclusively. Clinton, inimitably, wanted to do both. But the trade agreement with Mexico took precedence.

In September of 1993, Clinton made a series of striking public appearances: First, there was the Rabin-Arafat handshake. Then, a day later, Clinton stood with three former Presidents—Gerald Ford, Carter, and Bush—at a White House ceremony in support of NAFTA. His discussion of the issues at stake was so lucid that George Bush, who followed him to the podium, was moved to say, "Now I understand why he's inside looking out and I'm outside looking in."

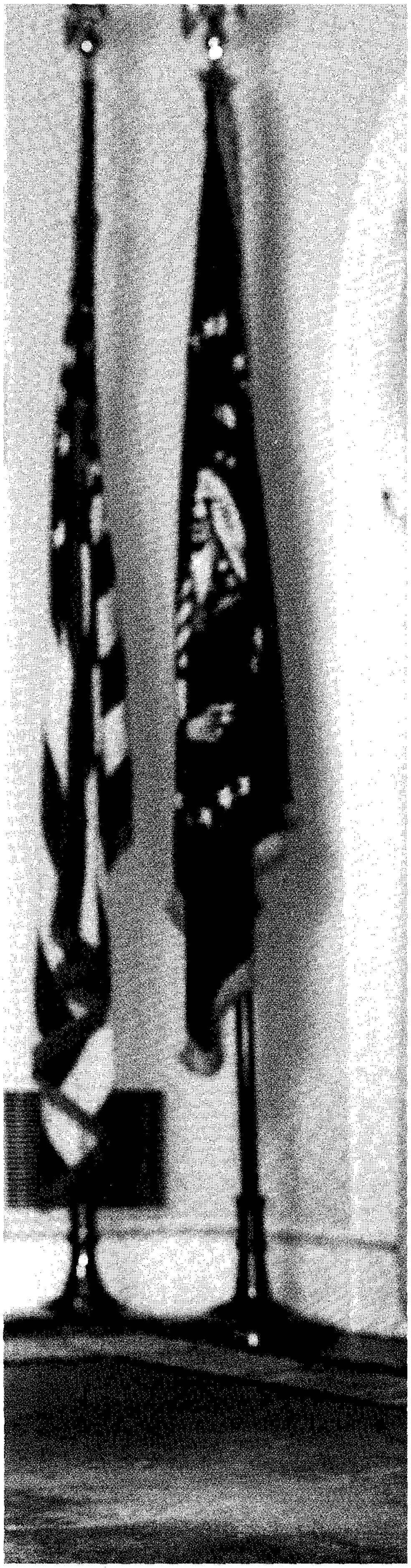
Clinton's presentation of the health plan, to a joint session of Congress eight days later, on September 22nd, was equally impressive. Early polls showed that a majority of the public supported universal coverage; but the politics remained difficult. Before the speech, Clinton was visited by Lane Kirkland, the president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O., who said, "Mr. President, we have ten million dollars we'd like to spend on television ads promoting your health-care plan. . . . Of course, if you insist on going ahead with NAFTA, we're going to have to take the ten million dollars and spend it in opposition to that."

Clinton refused to budge. He spent much of the autumn working to pass NAFTA, but there was a significant price for his success. "We didn't know enough about how the system worked," Clinton told me. "It can only digest so much at once. We did a big economic plan and NAFTA in '93. But there's no way the system could digest the health-care plan. . . . I should have done welfare reform before health care. If I had done welfare reform first, that would have given Democrats the chance to appeal to the more conservative and moderate vote. . . . But I think in the beginning, for the first two years, I was pushing a lot of rocks up the hill. I was obsessed. . . . I was trying to get as much done as quickly as I could and also trying to learn the job, learn how to get the White House functioning."

And yet, for just a moment at the end of 1993, the President seemed to be succeeding on all fronts. His approval ratings, which had dived in the spring, revived. He gave a stunning, impromptu performance before a group of black ministers in Memphis—perhaps the best speech an American President has ever delivered to a black audience, and surely the toughest. He spoke informally, even brazenly, presuming to know what Martin Luther King, Jr., might say if he


THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE
Crawford

President Clinton in the White House Cabinet Room. "We need to demystify the job."



were still alive: "'I fought for freedom,' he would say, 'but not for the freedom of people to kill each other with reckless abandon, not for the freedom of children to have children, and the fathers of the children to walk away from them and abandon them as if they don't amount to anything. . . . This is not what I lived and died for.' "

The reception was transcendent: the ministers seemed to sense, as many African-Americans did, that this President of the United States was *family*. Jesse Jackson later said, "Clinton's upbringing, from poverty-stricken Arkansas to Oxford, gave him almost the entire range of human experience, and so wherever he lands he's at home. If he's riding in the golf cart, he's mindful of his fellow-golfers, and he's also mindful of the caddy, and the cook."

But there was another, equally telling moment that fall. When the President presented the health-care plan to a joint session of Congress, the wrong speech—his budget address from seven months earlier—was on the teleprompter. He had to stand in front of Congress, and the nation, and *make it up* until the correct text was found. The consultant Paul Begala later asked him, "When that happened, what were you thinking?"

"I was thinking, Oh, Lord, you're testing me." Clinton stopped and smiled, relishing the near-death experience. "O.K.!"

ENEMIES

Bill Clinton has a favorite joke. He's told it on the campaign trail for years, and in one of our recent talks he told it again: "A guy is walking along the edge of the Grand Canyon and he falls off. He's hurtling down hundreds of feet to certain death and he looks up and grabs this twig, and it breaks his fall. He heaves a sigh of relief and then, all of a sudden, he sees the roots coming loose. He looks up to the sky and says, 'God, why me? I'm a good person. I've taken care of my family. I've paid my taxes. I've worked all my life. Why me?' And this thunderous voice says, 'Son, there's just something about you that I don't like.' "

We had been talking about the extravagant disdain that Clinton has always inspired among his opponents. From the beginning, there was a sense—radiating from the Gingrich wing of the Republican Party, and also from a group of unflagging, unpleasant Clinton-haters in Arkansas—that the new President was a usurper who had managed to hoodwink the American public. He was to be opposed at every turn, by any means necessary, and, if possible, destroyed. "It's true," Bob Dole said softly, this summer, shaking his head. "We had a pretty hard-right group in the Party who were never going to accept him."

The Clintons arrived in Washington with a cramped, defensive obsession about the forces arrayed against them. This predisposition was encouraged by an almost Shakespearean retinue of personal advisers—the First Lady always seemed to keep one such about: her friend Susan Thomases, at first; and, in the fall of 1997, the former journalist Sidney Blumenthal—who sometimes floated exotic Manichaean scenarios about the world outside the gates. (The additional presence of a fair number of Little Rock political cronies, including several former law partners of the First Lady, was neither unusual nor unwarranted, but it did nothing to diminish the garrison atmosphere.)

Relations with the press were dreadful from the start. At the Inaugural Gala in 1993, a video was shown—produced by the Clintons' Hollywood friends Harry and Linda Thomason—which featured prominent journalists making fools of themselves on television, as they predicted Clinton's demise during the campaign. Such gloating was vindictive and off target. Clinton's most powerful enemies in the press rarely appeared on talk shows. Robert Bartley, the editor of the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, never wavered from his initial assumption that the Clintons were corrupt. The centerpiece of his effort to discredit the new Administration was a series of editorials questioning the integrity of the members of the Rose Law Firm who had come to Washington from Arkansas—"Who Is Webster Hubbell?" and then "Who Is Vincent Foster?" and "Who Is William Kennedy III?" and, ultimately, "Who Is Hillary Clinton?" Foster mentioned the *Journal* screeds in anguished musings written on a yellow legal pad, and then torn to pieces, before he committed suicide, on July 20, 1993.

Foster's suicide confirmed the worst fantasies of both sides. For the Clintons, the message was clear: this was to be, literally, war to the death. Among the more extravagant sensationalists in the press, Foster's death reinforced the delusion of a lethal immorality in the White House. Two separate investigations by special prosecutors confirmed the obvious: that Foster had taken his own life.

Often, stories that were reluctantly pursued by the establishment press—especially those that concerned sex—were forced into view by peripheral sources, and the Clintons were infuriated by the willingness of responsible journalists to take part in this process. The most significant of these was an article that appeared in *The American Spectator*, an intemperate conservative monthly, in which former Arkansas state troopers told tales about the sex lives of the Clintons. (The investigation was funded by the conservative billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife, whose name later appeared at the center of a famous White House "Right-Wing Conspiracy" chart.) The Los Angeles *Times*, which had also been interviewing troopers, quickly printed its version of the story, which was then picked up by everyone else. Indeed, Troopergate began the process that led to the impeachment of the President. One of the Governor's alleged women, Paula Jones, was encouraged by conservatives to tell her story: that the Governor of Arkansas had crudely mistaken her friendliness for availability, and that she had refused him. The trooper who originally told the story, Danny Ferguson, had a different version: Jones had visited Clinton in a hotel room and emerged smiling, offering herself in perpetuity as "the Governor's girlfriend."

The Paula Jones story was dismissed at first, mostly because of its ideological provenance. But it had the ring of truth—at least, Ferguson's version did—and it gained great currency in Washington. I was among the earliest in the mainstream press to make a big deal of it, in precisely the way the Clintons found most reprehensible—metaphorically, and somewhat disingenuously. In May of 1994, in a *Newsweek* essay entitled "The Politics of Promiscuity," I argued that Clinton's sloppy policymaking, especially overseas, might be a consequence of his sloppy personal life. The argument soon proved wrongheaded (to its author, at least), as the President became a far more disciplined policymaker, but many of his closest aides continued to be appalled by his private thoughtlessness and self-indulgence, which were as striking as his impressive public empathy.

"That's right, Timmy—once upon a time, Grandpa was part of the target audience, just like you."

I asked the President if he had been surprised by the atmosphere that greeted him in Washington. "Now I know things I didn't know then," he began, but then had another thought: "Actually, I did know something. In 1990, before I decided to run, I got a call from a guy I knew in the Bush White House, who told me not to run. Bush was at, like, eighty per cent in the polls, and I was saying how the President should use his popularity to fix the economy. And, after about five minutes, this guy says, 'Now, let's just cut the crap. We've looked at this crowd' "—all the Democrats considering a race against Bush in 1992—" 'and we can beat them all. You're different. You might beat us, and so, if you do run, we're going to have to take you out early.' "

"After I got up here and started dealing with them, I realized that the Republicans had been in power since Nixon—with the exception of Jimmy Carter, whose election they saw purely as a function of Watergate." The President detoured briefly into a defense of Carter's Presidency as a spiritual precursor of the New Democrat movement, and went on, "They believed that there'd never be another Democratic President. I really think a lot of them thought they could hold the White House until a third party came along to basically offer a competing vision. So they just never saw me as a legitimate person."

Clinton acknowledged that the Democrats' control of Congress, and their bitter campaigns against Republican appointees, had contributed to the ugliness: "I didn't like the nature of their arguments against John Tower"—the occasionally bibulous former Texas senator whom George Bush had tried to appoint as Defense Secretary—"or the fact that somebody checked out the movies that Bob Bork rented. I mean, I knew that some of this was up here, but I never thought I'd see it in the kind of systematic way that I saw it unfold. But when I got to know Newt Gingrich and actually had a lot of candid conversations with him, I realized that's just the way they thought politics worked."

I mentioned that Gingrich had called politics "war without blood."

"Yeah," the President replied. "I had a

THE SAINT AND THE CRAB

Along the *campo,* Manin's bronze winged lion prowls
among the tanned intruders, licking their hands.
Pools of iridescent shellfish
lie open in the restaurant window,

a shop of otherworldly opals, the mussels' sheen
the skies of a closed heaven, crabs flat on their backs,
their armor intricate trapped plates and escapements.
The squid slumps in its own ink, the octopus appalled

in its slime. Many and ingenious are the postures of death.
But look! There, in a corner, beneath a willowware plate,
a lone crab flicks its claws, creeping
over a casket of walleyed fish,

through the valley of oysters keeping their counsel,
only to shift wearily under the shadow of a wine bottle.
Which of the saints watches over the saintly crab?
The man of forks and spears, the man of arrows.

In the Ca' d'Oro, the stiffened Sebastian takes
each arrow through his flesh like a skewer.
He wears a little napkin around his middle.
Saint, watch over the fragile boat of the runaway crab.

Let him steal his way back to the green lagoon,
go floating down the Grand Canal on his own *motoscafo.*
Let him wave his bent claws in a mockery of farewell,
lest we eat in his hollow shell his captive meat.

—*William Logan*

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fascinating conversation with one of the Republican senators in the middle of the D'Amato hearings"—Alfonse D'Amato, the former senator from New York, had been investigating Whitewater, the ancient Arkansas real-estate deal in which the Clintons had invested—"when they were impugning Hillary, and I asked this guy, who was pretty candid, 'Do you really think my wife and I did anything wrong in this Whitewater thing?' He just started laughing. . . . He said, 'Of course you didn't do anything wrong. That's not the point. The point of this is to make people *think* you did something wrong.' "

Later, the President returned to his conversation with the unnamed and most convenient Republican in order to discuss his feelings about the press: "That same senator . . . also said the Republicans had learned a lot from my Presidency. He said that before they thought the press was liberal, but, 'Now we have a different view. We think they *are* liberal and they vote like you, but they think like us and that's more important.' I said, 'What do you mean?' And he said, 'Well, we just don't believe in government very much, but we love power, and, you know, the press wants to be powerful and we both get it the same way—by hurting you.' I mean, there could be something to that. Maybe there were times when I didn't handle the press all that well in the early days, but . . . if you look back over it the Whitewater thing was a total fraud."

The Yale historian Stephen Skowronek describes Clinton as a "third way" President, although his term means something different from Clinton's: like Woodrow Wilson and Richard Nixon, Clinton was elected by a plurality of the American electorate, not a majority, in a three-way race. Each man governed by taking on the more popular goals of the opposition's agenda, sanding off the rough edges, and achieving them. "Clinton managed to put himself at the head of three Republican parades: deficit reduction, welfare reform, and free trade," Robert Reich, who left the Administration after a term as Secretary of Labor, said. "History may judge his Presidency the way it judges Nixon's opening to China or it may. . ."

Reich trailed off, unwilling to complete the thought. But Skowronek has observed that such Presidents, who are usually detested by the opposition and mistrusted by their own party, tend to rouse unruly passions: "While other leaders may appear weak or even incompetent, third-way Presidents are often judged moral degenerates, congenitally incapable of rising above nihilism and manipulation."

When I asked Clinton about the theory, he disputed the notion that he had appropriated the opposition's agenda: "The Republicans never owned crime and welfare. They owned them rhetorically, but they didn't do much about them." He added that "transformational figures" tended to create more heat than others "because most times people like to deal with folks they can put in a box. Maybe it's just, you know, maybe there's something about me that made them mad."

And then he told the joke about the Grand Canyon.

I suspect that what made "them" mad was more the style of Clinton's Presidency—the baby-boomer righteousness, the puerile ruthlessness—than the substance. The Clintons seemed to assume the same melodramatic terrain as their silliest opponents; every critic was an enemy; every issue required a war room. The President and the First Lady had an uncanny ability to act in ways that confirmed the worst suspicions about them. A reliance on market testing and "spin" undermined every decision the President made, even the honorable ones. (Clinton used public-opinion polling more extensively than any previous President had. At one point, his consultant Dick Morris used polls to convince Clinton to vacation in Wyoming instead of Martha's Vineyard; later, Morris tested what the President should say about the Lewinsky affair, and claimed to find that the public would not respond well to the truth.)

At the end of 1993, relations between

the Clintons and their various opponents were rapidly deteriorating. The Washington *Post* was requesting documents from the Clintons relating to Whitewater. The story was impenetrable, but there were some irresistible elements: the Clintons had gotten involved in a sweetheart land deal that ultimately failed, in partnership with shady, colorful proprietors of a looted local savings-and-loan. The First Lady had also made a lot of money, with very little risk, in cattle futures. But, after years of dedicated investigation—and the expenditure of fifty-two million dollars in public funds by three special prosecutors—no evidence of criminality has been found.

The Washington *Post* request for information led, however, to a turning point in the Administration's history. It was a rare moment when even George Stephanopoulos and David Gergen agreed on the proper course of action: release everything, answer every question, lance the boil. The Clintons disagreed, vehemently. Stephanopoulos, in his memoir, described a meeting in the Oval Office dining room on December 11, 1993, in which he and Gergen pleaded with the President to relent:

> “I don't have a big problem with giving them what we have,” he said almost apologetically, his mind elsewhere. . . . “But Hillary . . .”
>
> Saying her name flipped a switch in his head. Suddenly, his eyes lit up, and two years' worth of venom spewed out of his mouth. You could usually tell when Clinton was making Hillary's argument: Even if he was yelling, his voice had a flat quality, as if he were a high school debater speeding through a series of memorized facts. The antipress script was familiar to me by now. “No, you're wrong,” he said. “The questions *won't* stop. . . . They'll *always* want more. *No* President has ever been treated like I've been treated.”

More than six years later, when I asked Clinton if the decision to refuse the *Post* had been a mistake, he responded in much the same manner as Stephanopoulos described, but now he added new targets: unnamed staff members—Stephanopoulos and Gergen, no doubt—who had counselled him to coöperate. He began quietly, saying he didn't believe that coöperating with the *Post* would have made any difference in the end. “What I regret,” he said “is asking for the special counsel.”

In January of 1994, Clinton had asked Janet Reno to appoint someone to investigate the Whitewater matter. She chose a moderate Republican, Robert Fiske, who was later replaced—when a federal court intervened—by Kenneth Starr. The President didn't raise his voice, but he was clearly angry as he remembered asking Reno to act: “I did it because I was exhausted, because I had just buried my mother, and because I had people in the White House who couldn't stand the heat and they suggested that I do it, that I had to do it. I knew there was nothing to it, it was just a lie—and I had people like Bernie Nussbaum and Bruce Lindsey”—two White House aides—“screaming at me not to do it. . . . I shouldn't talk about this much until I'm out of office, but I believe that the almost hysterical desire to have something to investigate was so great that it wouldn't have made any difference. What did this thing hang on? There was nothing in those private papers. . . . And, if you notice, when Starr got ahold of this he immediately abandoned it and went on to other stuff. There never was anything to it . . . and I have no reason to believe that”—giving the documents to the *Post*—“would have made any difference. I think they would have found some way to say, ‘Oh, there are questions here. Let's have a special counsel.’ ”

As Stephanopoulos observes, the combustible phenomenon at the heart of this fury is the relationship between the President and the First Lady. The nature of the Clinton marriage is an essential but unknowable element in any consideration of this Presidency. It is inextricably entwined in the two great disasters of the Clinton years: Mrs. Clinton's health-insurance proposal and the Lewinsky scandal. Most of the speculation about the marriage has tended to be an inferior grade of pop psychology; indeed, the safest course probably is to believe all the conflicting theories: that the marriage is contentious, political, marked by bouts of infidelity, passionate (in every sense of the word), loving, and certainly enduring. But it is also fair to observe that, despite—and sometimes, perhaps, because of—the inconsistencies in their marriage, the Clintons tend toward a united, myopic irrationality in moments of stress.

It is likely, for example, that marital pressures had something to do with the President's inept handling of the health-insurance issue, which reached a critical stage during the same months that the press was obsessed with Whitewater and Troopergate. The plan that emerged from the health-care task force, led by Mrs. Clinton and Ira Magaziner, was both a substantive and a political failure—the former was understandable, the latter shocking, given the President's antennae. Both seemed a consequence of the First Lady's stubborn idealism.

The Clintons saw their plan as the most direct path to universal coverage, and a mere extension of the messy American status quo: all employers would be required to provide health insurance for their employees. As expected, the “employer mandate” was opposed by the small-business community and its Republican friends in Congress. But New Democrats didn't like it, either; and more than a few members of the White House staff were surprised by the level of detail—more than a thousand pages of codicils, stipulating the precise sort of coverage that employers would have to provide and creating a new federal bureaucracy to control costs. “Most people in the White House couldn't understand what was in the plan,” Leon Panetta said. “If they couldn't explain it to us, they weren't going to explain it to the Congress.”

Magaziner now says that the plan became as abstruse as it did because he wasn't provided with adequate political and legislative advice. “The battle to pass the budget was so intense that no one was ever available to help out,” he told me. “I had a meeting in March of 1993 with the House leadership, including several of the Democratic committee chairs, tough, smart guys like Dan Rostenkowski and John Dingell. Howard Paster”—Clinton's liaison to Congress—“was supposed to go with me, to explain the legislative strategy. But he was pulled into a budget meeting. And so, after I did my part and explained the plan, Rostenkowski looked at me and said, ‘O.K., now, how are we going to get this done?’ And, of course, I had no idea. I never had credibility with them again.”

But others remember a less humble Magaziner and an inflexible First Lady. The same scene was played out repeatedly within the White House in the months before the health-care plan was made public: Magaziner and Mrs. Clinton would give a progress report; questions would be raised; the First Lady would coldly dismiss the questioner—theirs was the only possible plan. It was the right thing to do, and they were going to do it. "I remember the first time I heard them lay it out," a high-ranking staff member with legislative experience said. "I said, 'This is pretty complicated.' The First Lady acted as if anyone who disagreed with her didn't know what she was talking about—and I said to myself, 'O.K., I'm recusing myself from this issue.' "

During one of our conversations, the President admitted that a more elegant solution would have been to simply give health-care tax credits (or vouchers) to those who needed them. This was, essentially, the proposal made by Bill Bradley in the 2000 Presidential campaign. "That's what you're going to have eventually," the President conceded, "and if I could do it now that's what I would offer. The problem is I couldn't do it in '94, with the deficits the way they were, without a tax increase."

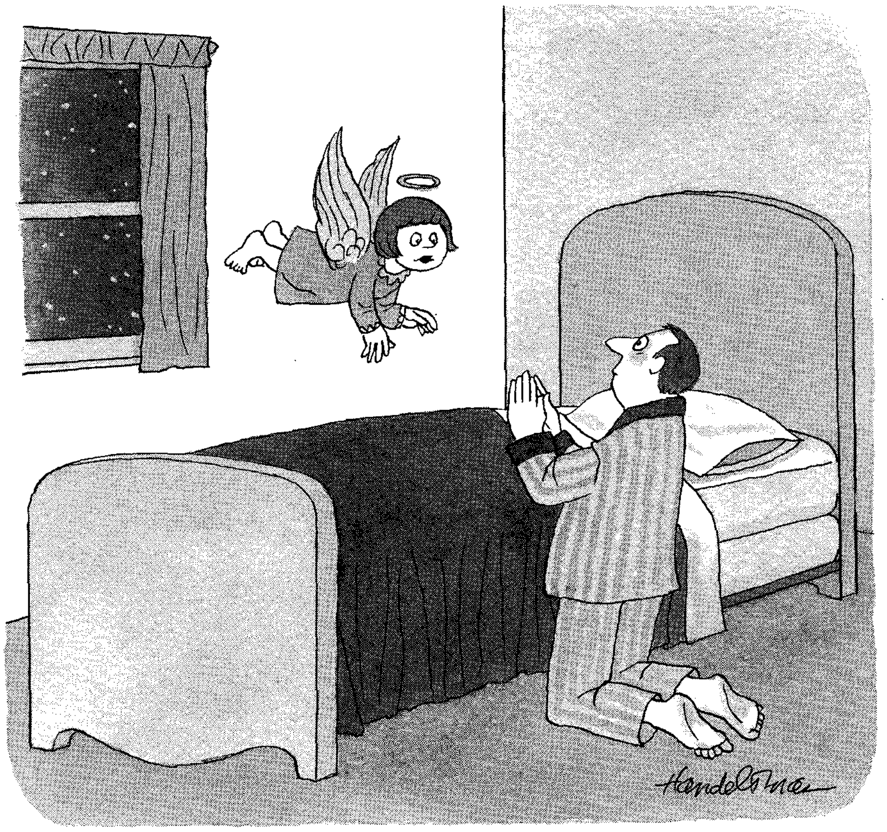
But there was a plan in the fall of 1993—a Republican plan, proposed by Senator John Chafee, of Rhode Island—that reached universal coverage through a tax-credit-subsidy system and included a tax increase to pay for it. The Chafee plan, introduced at the same time as the Clinton proposal, also had twenty-two Republican co-sponsors, including the Senate Minority Leader, Bob Dole. I asked Clinton what would have happened if he had rushed over to Chafee's press conference, dumped his task force's thirteen-hundred-page bill in the wastebasket, and said, "I'm with him."

"Maybe if I had gone to Chafee's press conference, that would have worked," the President said, reluctantly. But both he and the First Lady seem certain that Dole—who was thinking about running for President, and was always concerned about his lack of credibility with the Republican right wing—would have been forced to back out eventually. The President says that he proposed a bipartisan health-insurance plan: "And Dole said to me—I'll never forget this, because we were at a leadership meeting in the Cabinet Room—he said, 'No, that's not the way we should do it. You introduce a bill, we'll introduce a bill, and then we'll get together . . . and we'll pass a compromise.' After that, Dole got a memo from Bill Kristol"—the Republican strategist, who is now the publisher of the conservative magazine *The Weekly Standard*—"which basically took the Gingrich line: If universal health care passes, the Democrats will get credit for it. So you have to make sure nothing happens. After that, I don't really think we had a chance. . . . With that single exception, in all my other dealings with Dole he was always honest. In this case, I think he saw a chance to win the majority in Congress, a chance to get elected President . . . and that's what I think happened."

There is a cosmic accuracy to the President's recollection, but some problems with the specifics. Dole doesn't remember the scene in the Cabinet Room (and Magaziner and others have Chafee, not Dole, making the offer of separate, partisan bills leading to a compromise). And there is evidence that Dole, a Second World War veteran whose life was saved by government-provided health care, wanted to find some sort of compromise. "We had several dinner meetings, and I remember saying to the First Lady, 'If you can sell it to Sheila, you can probably sell it to me,' " Dole recalled, referring to his chief of staff, Sheila Burke, who was extremely knowledgeable on health-care issues. "Everyone knew there was a problem," he continued. "There were all these children who needed coverage, but we had no input. And, as I recall, Mrs. Clinton didn't want to give up very much—and then the opposition did start building within my party."

By late spring of 1994, the President understood that health care was in trouble. His pollster, Stan Greenberg, told him that the Democrats might have trouble retaining the Senate (there was, at this point, no way to foresee the loss of both houses of Congress). Greenberg had an idea: Clinton should give a speech condemning the Republicans for blocking health-care reform, and then introduce a welfare-reform bill. If the Democrats could pass both welfare reform and a crime bill they would have a record of accomplishment to run on in the fall elections. Clinton asked Greenberg to approach House Speaker Tom Foley about it. "Foley said absolutely not," Greenberg said. "He said the liberals would be totally opposed to welfare reform, and there was still the hope that health care could be pushed through."

Clinton now acknowledges that the White House strategy was a mistake,



"Sorry, the line is busy again. He and Joe Lieberman are still exchanging pleasantries."

that the First Lady's task force should have produced only a statement of general principles and then said, "O.K., here's all of our work—you guys draft the bill. Or I should have insisted that we have a joint bill." But he refuses to second-guess either his wife or the decision to put her in charge of such a prominent policy initiative. "She gets a total bum rap on this," he said. "She was told, we're not going to have a tax increase, but you have to get to one-hundred-per-cent coverage. . . . And she was also told that managed care was going to happen, but you have to have some protections in there—so she was operating within constraints that we now know are impossible. . . . But it was my mistake, not hers. All she did was what she was asked to do."

At the end of the conversation in which the President and I discussed health care, Mrs. Clinton suddenly appeared and asked me, with a smile, how she had fared. "He ripped you up," I told her, also with a smile. The President fairly leaped from his chair, crossed the room, put his arms around Mrs. Clinton, and kissed her several times on the forehead. "I told him," he said, "that health care was all my fault."

"THE PRESIDENT IS RELEVANT"

Leon Panetta has an easy laugh and a humble style that indicate both sanity and moderation. He served in Congress for sixteen years, a conservative on fiscal matters but liberal on almost everything else, and he was thrilled to be working for a President who shared his passion for deficit reduction. But after eighteen months of White House chaos Panetta was perplexed: how did such a talented politician tolerate so much disorganization around him? He sensed that Clinton's unwillingness to confront those with whom he disagreed was part of the problem. "His nature is not to be confrontational. I never heard the President tell anyone, 'You're full of shit,' even when I knew he wanted to."

Mack McLarty, Clinton's Arkansas friend who served as his first chief of staff, was equally polite. Panetta believed that a screamer, a *nice* screamer, was needed in some position of authority. As it happened, the President had similar thoughts: he asked Panetta to become chief of staff, and designated screamer, in late June of 1994. By most accounts, the result was a more orderly West Wing operation, although it was still a strange one.

There were three matched pairs of advisers. The First Lady and the Vice-President were the senior pair; the First Lady was more reticent after health care, but she was still the leading liberal voice in the Administration, and Gore had always been the most consistent New Democrat. Panetta added his own pair, two new deputy chiefs of staff: the New York liberal Harold Ickes, to handle the political aspects of the Presidency; and Erskine Bowles, a moderate from North Carolina who was the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, to take charge of organization and scheduling. As for the third pair of advisers, Panetta, as chief of staff, was one of them; but soon after the 1994 elections, when the Democrats lost Congress, he realized that he had a secret doppelgänger.

"You are absolutely right—World Series is a misnomer. Now please shut up."

The mystery adviser was Dick Morris, the political consultant, who had helped Clinton get reëlected governor of Arkansas in 1982. Morris had since become politically ambidextrous—one of his more prominent clients was Trent Lott, soon to be the Republican Senate Majority Leader. But that hadn't stopped the First Lady, who was as pragmatic about politics as she was idealistic about policy, from asking Morris for advice on how to save the Presidency. As usual, there was an odd, Rodham Clinton fondness for the surreptitious: Morris's presence was to be kept a secret. His code name was Charlie, a reference, many suspected, to the disembodied voice in the "Charlie's Angels" television series. It was, Panetta believed, "weird . . . very weird."

Morris's role, when it was eventually divulged, seemed further evidence of Clinton's lack of political scruple or philosophy. Again, the President had gone to an outside adviser in order to steer him onto a more moderate path and, again, the adviser was sort of a Republican, which reinforced the notion, especially among liberals, that the New Democrat stance was a mirage. Indeed, even many New Democrats feared that Bill Clinton had merely used their agenda to win office; for a time, Al From considered formally disassociating the Democratic Leadership Council from the President. "I've spent my life working on these ideas," a Progressive Policy Institute fellow told me, over dinner one evening, with tears in his eyes, "and Bill Clinton has discredited them in two years."

The heroic Presidency—the noble achievements and grand gestures—that Bill Clinton had planned for all his life was no longer possible. Now Clinton faced a more prosaic challenge: if he hoped to survive, he would have to run a tactical, defensive Presidency. He would need Republican support to pass anything, even a budget; but he couldn't risk alienating too many Democrats, whose

THE WATER DESK

votes he would need to sustain his veto of the wilder Republican proposals. If he was skillful, he might build the moderate bipartisan congressional majority that probably was his most natural governing coalition. (Morris, who had no political philosophy, inadvertently trivialized this possibility by calling it "triangulation.")

At first, Clinton seemed almost an anachronism in Newt Gingrich's angry Capitol. The House passed most of the provisions of the Contract with America, which was Gingrich's ten-point governing doctrine. The Contract later died in the Senate, but for a moment the new Speaker was the most important politician in America—a virtual prime minister, some said. (Gingrich, a grandiose and intemperate man, who was blinded by the sudden acclaim, acted as if he believed this himself.)

Clinton's low point appeared to come on April 18, 1995, when he held a rare prime-time press conference—only one television network chose to broadcast it live—in which he was asked to respond to a question about his relevance to the policy process under way in the Republican Congress: "The President is relevant. . . . The Constitution gives me relevance; the power of our ideas gives me relevance; the record we have built up over the last two years and the things we're trying to do give me relevance."

The President later regretted using that word; he had, in fact, begun to plot the coming battle against Gingrich, and he was not entirely pessimistic. He and Mrs. Clinton had taken the Speaker's measure in a series of personal encounters. Both Clintons found the Speaker more malleable than they expected, transparently "needy." The President began to sense how Gingrich's personality might be exploited. He also knew that he was not without weapons. He had the veto, and that was no small thing. He had learned that the culture of the federal capital was essentially conservative: it was far easier to oppose than to propose, and he assumed that the status quo was as impregnable from the right as it was from the left. He would let the Republicans try to cut taxes while balancing the budget, and then he would pick them apart—especially if they actually tried to limit (to "cut," as Clinton would insist) projected increases in overall spending for popular entitlement programs like Medicare. The strategy was known within the White House as "smoke them out." Over time, it worked better than anyone expected.

Even at his political nadir, Clinton refused to succumb to expediency on policy matters that he considered critical. In January of 1995, he faced a difficult decision after the collapse of the Mexican peso. Robert Rubin, who had just taken the oath of office as Treasury Secretary, told the President that if the United States didn't create a twenty-billion-dollar reserve fund for the Mexicans there could be a financial crisis and the possibility of a global economic collapse. After a White House meeting on the afternoon of January 30th, Clinton asked the new Republican leaders for help in getting a Mexican "bailout" through Congress. "Gingrich said absolutely not," Stephanopoulos recalled. "He lectured us about bailing out a drug-running dictatorship. He actually wanted Clinton to call Rush Limbaugh about it! It was really obnoxious."

That evening, Rubin and his deputy, Lawrence Summers, met with Clinton in the Oval Office; Stephanopoulos was there, too. Rubin had figured out a way to advance the Mexicans the money without congressional approval. But a Los Angeles *Times* poll showed that the public opposed a bailout by greater than a five-to-one margin. Rubin, Summers, and Stephanopoulos remember the scene similarly. "We pointed out to him that there was no guarantee the support program would work," Rubin recalled. "And if it didn't work it might be very damaging to his reëlection prospects. But it didn't take ten minutes for him to make the decision. He just said, 'Let's do it.' "

"I was so blown away by that," Stephanopoulos said. "I went home that night and wrote the President a fan letter." The Mexicans paid back the loan ahead of schedule.

"SMOKE THEM OUT"

On the morning of April 19, 1995, the day after Clinton had been forced to defend his own relevance, a truck bomb set by right-wing extremists destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, in Oklahoma City, killing a hundred and sixty-eight people. Dazed and bleeding federal employees filled the streets of Oklahoma City; their dead children were carried out of the ruin of the building's day-care center. "I will never again use the word 'bureaucrat' publicly," Clinton told Rubin, in the Oval Office, a few days later. "It only plays on the resentments people feel about government."

Clinton delivered a strong eulogy at a prayer service commemorating the victims, four days after the bombing. Then, on May 5th, at Michigan State University, he elaborated:

> I say this to the militias and all others who believe that the greatest threat to freedom comes from the government instead of from those who would take away our freedom: If you say violence is an acceptable way to make change, you are wrong. If you say government is in a conspiracy to take your freedom away, you are just plain wrong. . . .
>
> How dare you suggest that we in the freest nation on earth live in tyranny? How dare you call yourselves patriots and heroes?
>
> I say to you, all of you . . . there is nothing patriotic about hating your country, or pretending that you can love your country but despise your government.

The House Republicans were as much the target of this speech as were the right-wing militias: the Gingrich movement had been built on government-bashing in the name of patriotism. The President now had not only a tactical strategy ("smoke them out") and an intellectual rationale for his campaign against the Republican revolution; he also had a new reservoir of public emotion to call upon. After a long winter's despair, he was palpably the President of the United States once more. "It was a breaking of the ice," he said of the Michigan State speech.

"Smoke them out" began to work when the Republicans finally presented their version of a balanced budget, which took significant bites out of Medicare and Medicaid. Most of those on the White House staff, especially the congressional liberals like Stephanopoulos and Panetta, believed that Clinton should sit tight and allow the Republicans to suffocate under the weight of their proposal. But the President had doubts about the wisdom and propriety of passivity. Later in May, in an interview on New Hampshire public radio, Clinton said that he might well propose his own version of a balanced budget. This touched off a rowdy staff session in the Roosevelt Room, in which various aides argued over whether the President had or hadn't meant what he'd just said. Finally, Erskine Bowles stood up and said, "For God's sake, I'm going to just go in and ask him."

A few minutes later, Bowles returned from the Oval Office and said that the President meant what he had said. Stephanopoulos and Gene Sperling, still not convinced, met with the President and tried to persuade him to wait. "Well, that's just great," Clinton exploded. "I'll just wait. I'll tear up their plan and when people say 'Well, where's your plan?' I'll say, 'Who am I to have a plan? I'm just the President of the United States.' No, I'm not going to be the way they were on health care."

Months later, Sperling realized that there was a political rationale for the President's decision: Clinton was free to attack the Republicans harder, and more confidently, with his own balanced-budget proposal in place than he would have been if he had followed his staff's advice. Indeed, this proved to be a turning point in the Clinton Presidency: the beginning of his annual mastery of the Republicans in the year-end budget negotiations. "It was a crucial moment for the Republicans, too," Stephanopoulos told me recently. "Just as we might have gotten universal health care if we had signed on to the Chafee plan, the Republicans might have won the 1996 election—they might have been able to beat Bill Clinton—if they had signed on to our balanced-budget plan."

But the Gingrich Republicans refused to compromise on the budget. The new fiscal year began in October without an agreement, and parts of the federal government suspended operation for lack of funds a month later. After another round of negotiations, there was a second government "shutdown," in December. The President was complicit in all of this, but the Republicans, who had flaunted their intransigence, were blamed.

A single image probably ended Newt Gingrich's political career: after riding home on Air Force One from the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin that autumn, he complained to the press that he'd been given a seat in the back of the plane and hadn't had a chance to speak with Clinton about the budget. The Speaker of the House, who was promptly caricatured on the front page of the *Daily*

SKETCHBOOK BY
EDWARD SOREL

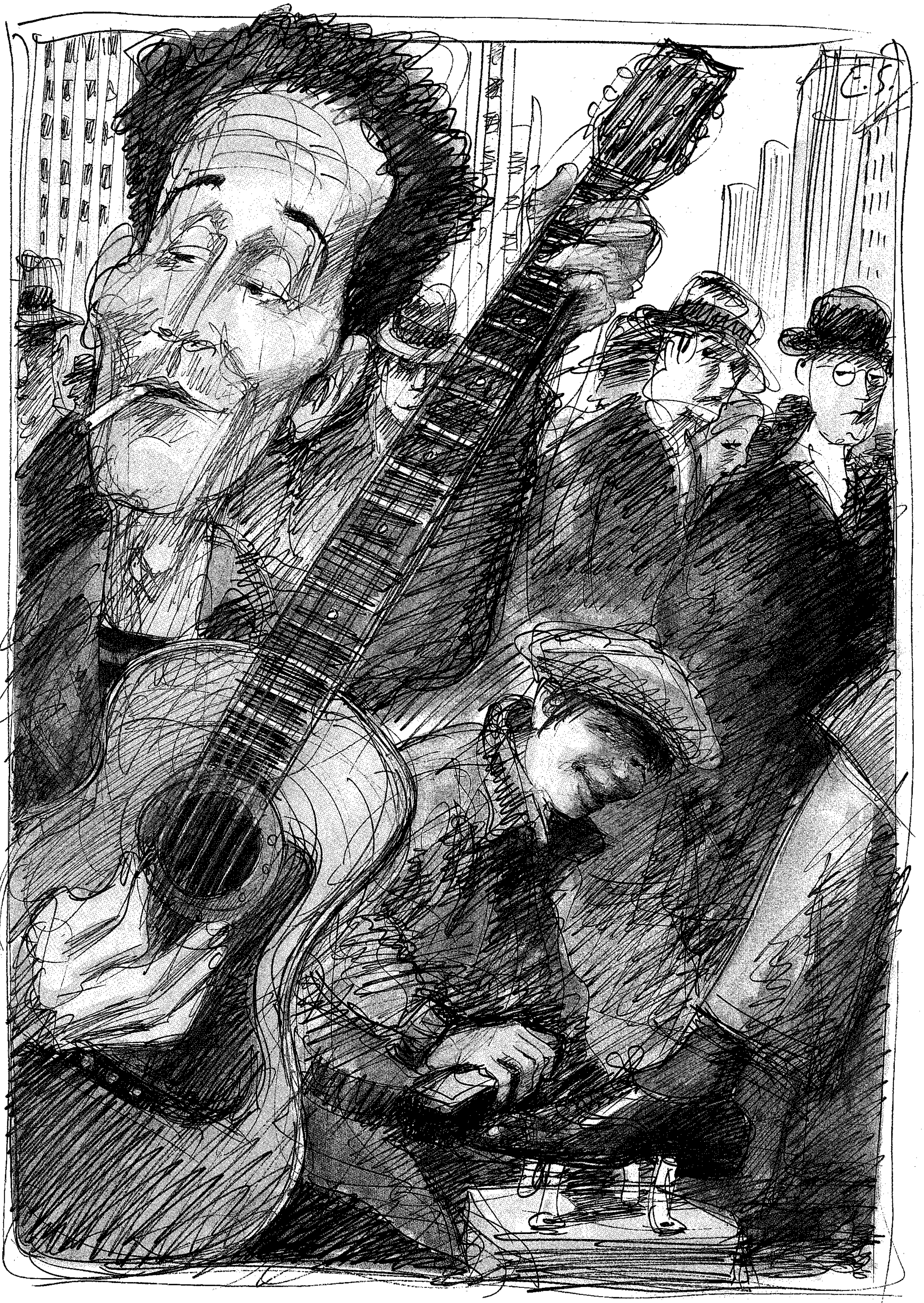
THE NATURAL

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who is retiring from the United States Senate after twenty-four years in office, spent his afternoons during the winter of 1942 shining shoes in front of the Wurlitzer Building, on Forty-second Street between Sixth Avenue and Broadway. He was fourteen years old, and lived in a small Upper West Side apartment with his mother. He would set up his kit after school each day, and work through the rush hour. A shine cost a nickel; the goal was to bring home a dollar.

One February afternoon, Moynihan noticed a crowd gathered across the street, at the entrance to Bryant Park. A small man with dark curly hair was sitting on a folding chair, playing a guitar and singing a ballad about the fire that had destroyed the Normandie—an ocean liner being refitted for use as a troop ship—over on the West Side piers a few days earlier. "That's Woody Guthrie," someone in the crowd said.

Woody Guthrie was twenty-nine years old. He had moved to New York in 1940, after a decade spent wandering the country—from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl to California and back. He was, by then, something of a celebrity in left-wing circles. He had a column in the *Daily Worker*, and was frequently heard on the radio; but he was happiest playing his guitar in the streets and taverns, singing songs he'd written, often on the spot, about the events of the day. Guthrie's ease—how natural he seemed sitting there, how effortlessly the words tumbled forth—was the quality that Daniel Patrick Moynihan remembered fifty-eight years later. "God, it was fun!" the Senator recalled.

—*Joe Klein*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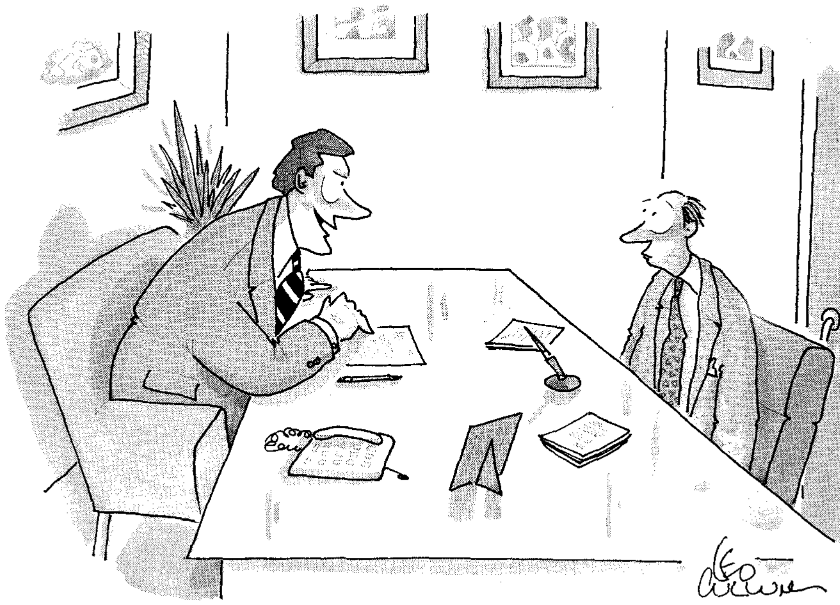


"Do you want me to explain to you just why you're having feelings of inadequacy?"

News as a "crybaby," had travelled from de-facto prime minister to steerage in eleven months.

Both sides still wonder about one aspect of the government shutdown: Were the Republicans acting merely out of ideological rigidity and tactical idiocy, or had they been quietly assured by Dick Morris that if they held firm Clinton would relent? Bob Dole, who was part of the negotiations but not privy to the various Morris scenarios, said—with ill-concealed disgust—"Lott mentioned to me a couple of times that Morris had made suggestions. If we did A or if we did B, it might work. I don't remember any of them working, though."

Indeed, Dole was in a bind that autumn. He was planning to run for President in 1996, and he had a good sense of who would be blamed for the budget impasse. "Maybe we made a mistake," he told me recently. "Maybe we should have taken those House guys on. . . . Somebody should have blown the whistle—if you've got the power, you have to provide the leadership. . . . But I always had the feeling that Armey's role in those meetings was to keep an eye on Bob Dole," he said, referring to Dick Armey, the House Majority Leader. "You know, it was 'Dole will make a deal. Dole will make a deal.' "

Dole was afraid, however, that if he did make a deal he would encourage a successful conservative challenge to his Presidential candidacy, and so he kept quiet. "Sat there for hours and hours listening to them," he said, rolling his eyes. "Newt would come up with some brilliant idea overnight—and then he'd come up with a completely different idea as we were leaving the room. This was a man with too many ideas. . . . But you had to sit through it, even though it was clear nothing was going to happen. Sat there so long I began to get paranoid. Were they just doing this to keep me out of New Hampshire?"

The White House staff had the very same fear as the House Republicans: they assumed that Clinton and Dole would make a deal if left to their own devices. "You just can't put Bill Clinton alone in a room with an opponent," a top adviser with great admiration for Clinton told me. "That's not what he's good at. He'll give away everything."

When Gene Sperling learned that Panetta had invited the Republicans to the White House for one last late-night negotiating session, he was so concerned that the President was about to give in—that Morris had arranged a secret deal—that he went to the chief of staff's office and asked, "What are we doing this for?"

"We're responsible for the United States government," Panetta replied, angrily—although he, too, was worried that a major political advantage might be squandered at the last minute. "If they want to talk, we're going to do it. Period."

At the meeting that night, Clinton not only held firm; he made a rare, face-to-face attack on an opponent. Dick Armey complained that the President was scaring his mother-in-law about Medicare. "I don't know about your mother-in-law, but if the budget passes, thousands of poor people are going to suffer because of your Medicaid cuts," Clinton said with a hiss. "I will never sign your Medicaid cuts. I don't care if I go down to five per cent in the polls. If you want your budget passed, you're going to have to put someone else in this chair."

It was well past midnight when the meeting ended, and the White House staff and Democratic congressional leaders gathered around the President in the Oval Office to congratulate him. "I wish the American people could have heard what you said," Vice-President Gore told Clinton. "I wouldn't change a single word—except maybe when you said you didn't care if your popularity got down to five per cent. You could have said zero."

"Sorry, Al," Clinton said with a rueful smile. "If we hit four per cent, we're caving."

THE INCREMENTALIST

Clinton's forcefulness on the night of the government shutdown, like his decisiveness in economic matters in general, was, literally, exceptional. "I can't tell you the number of times he called me a half hour after he had made some decision or other and tried to reconsider," said a former chief of staff.

In part, indecision was simply the way he went about making up his mind: Clinton was known, among his intimates, for his ability to argue an opponent's position better than the opponent did, and that, inevitably, led to moments when he actually found himself believing whatever argument he was making. Clinton's decision-making process was never truly complete until he advocated—usually briefly, always privately—the opposite position from the one he would eventually take.

The choices Clinton made on affirmative action and welfare reform as he approached the campaign of 1996 were very different and yet entirely similar. A cynic might say that he split the difference—he gave "old" Democrats affirmative action and "new" Democrats welfare reform. Although his equivocation undercut the moral authority of each decision, Clinton was consistent: he had stood for both throughout his political career, and, indeed, both were integral to his governing vision.

In the summer of 1995, the future of government-imposed affirmative-action programs seemed tenuous. The Supreme Court had recently acted, in the Adarand decision, to limit "set-asides"—that is, minority quotas—in government contracts; Dick Morris was brandishing polls that showed the public strongly opposed to racial "preferences" of any sort. But, in the end, the affirmative-action decision was personal for the President: he simply could not stand up in front of his friend Vernon Jordan or the Georgia congressman John Lewis or his public liaison, Alexis Herman—all of them African-Americans who had made sacrifices for the civil-rights cause—and say the politically expedient words.

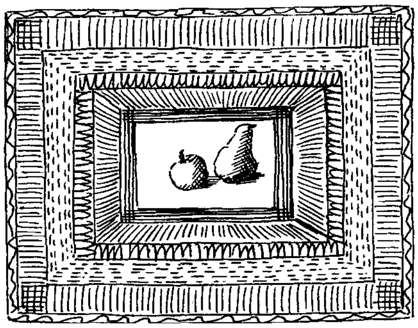
Welfare reform was tougher. A study by Wendell Primus, in Clinton's own Department of Health and Human Services, predicted that a million children might be further impoverished if the plan was enacted. Most of the President's staff, probably including his wife, were opposed. The final version of the bill, passed by the Republicans in Congress, had several gratuitously brutal provisions: denying benefits to legal immigrants; limiting food stamps and childhood disability payments. Clinton knew that welfare policy was an inexact science. Any plan that eliminated the lifetime guarantee of government support to poor mothers—as he had repeatedly promised to do—was going to have inequities; a certain number of women on welfare would be incapable of working under the best of circumstances. To force them into the job market, or onto the streets, would be cruel. But if the President refused to act, after promising to "end welfare as we know it," he was sure to pay a significant political price in the Presidential election (and Dick Morris had polls reflecting that, too).

On the morning of July 31, 1996, Elaine Kamarck, the former Progressive Policy Institute fellow, received an urgent call: the President wanted her to attend the final staff meeting on welfare reform. Kamarck had been part of Clinton's initial welfare task force, but she had been managing the Vice-President's reinventing-government program for several years. She wondered why Clinton wanted her to rejoin the internal welfare-reform debate. "And then it dawned on me, when I walked into the room," she recalled. "Clinton was going to sign the bill, and all these people were against it, and he needed a few more people in the room to make his argument. Harold Ickes, who is a really smart pol, was the only one who got it—as soon as I walked into the room, he was just staring daggers at me."

A great many people—Donna Shalala, Panetta, and Stephanopoulos, but also some surprising ones, like Bob Rubin—argued against the welfare-reform bill that day. Clinton listened to them all but refused to take a position. Then he retreated to the Oval Office, where Panetta argued even more vehemently against signing the bill. The President asked Al Gore what he thought. "I think the system is fundamentally broken," the Vice-President said. "It's worth the risk."

Clinton nodded his head and said, "I want to sign it. Let's do it."

For liberals, the decision was perhaps the most controversial of Clinton's years in office. "I always thought he would veto the bill," said Peter Edelman, a Health and Human Services official, who resigned over welfare reform. He and his wife, Marian Wright Edelman, had been friends of the Clintons for decades. "I was, and I remain, very disappointed with the President for several reasons," Edelman says. "First, his tendency to pick on people who don't have the political power to oppose him—especially on the crime and welfare-reform issues. Second, his personal behavior. And the glitz factor—all that fund-raising, the Hollywood business."



Edelman still believes that ending the entitlement to cash assistance for poor mothers was wrong, but his former colleague David Ellwood, a welfare specialist and Harvard academic, who left the Administration a year before the bill was signed, has had a more complicated reaction. "The results are much better than I expected," Ellwood told me, after expressing concern about the long-term consequences of welfare reform, especially if there is a recession. "And the public knows only half the story. It knows that welfare rolls have been almost cut in half. The strong economy helped that, and it's also true that there were a lot of people who held jobs in the underground economy who were receiving benefits illegally. But what people don't know is that the President did exactly what he said he was going to do: he made work pay. He did it incrementally, but the results have been dramatic. In 1986, a single mother who left welfare for work could expect to make about two thousand dollars more than she was getting from the government and lose her health benefits. In 1999, she gets seven thousand more and keeps her health benefits. People have responded to these incentives. There's been an enormous increase in the workforce participation rate among the poorest women—from thirty to over fifty per cent in the last five years. We've never seen anything like it."

In a way, this is the most admirable aspect of Bill Clinton's record in office, and the least Clintonian: a triumph of persistence, not charisma. For six years, the President worked patiently to force a reluctant Republican Congress to spend more money on a surprising array of programs, especially those that raised the incomes of the working poor. These efforts had none of the drama of the government shutdowns or the health-care debate; they were nearly invisible, in fact, hidden in the massive budget "reconciliation" packages negotiated each fall. Most of the victories were tiny by federal standards, but the numbers have gathered cumulative force over time—even in 1998 and 1999, with Washington supposedly paralyzed by the Lewinsky scandal and impeachment proceedings, Clinton continued his work, winning a few hundred million dollars here, a billion there for programs he favored. Head

Start has grown from $2.8 billion in 1993 to $5.3 billion in 2000; child-care supports have grown from $4.5 billion to $9.3 billion; the earned-income tax credit from $12.4 billion in 1993 to $30.4 billion in 2000; AmeriCorps, the national-service program that Republicans have repeatedly attempted to kill, has actually grown from $373 million in 1994 to $473 million in 2000. The list is diverse, involving almost every area of domestic spending (and, in more recent years, defense appropriations as well).

By the beginning of the 1996 Presidential campaign, a year after the Republicans had taken control of Congress, Clinton was once again the most formidable politician in the country. Bob Dole had always been a more popular and effective politician in Washington than he was on the hustings; by 1996, he simply seemed too old to be President.

As the inevitability of Clinton's reëlection settled in on the astonished Republicans, so did another reality: Congress would have to modify its image, and get some things accomplished, if the Republicans wanted to keep their majorities. The Gingrich revolutionaries soon found themselves passing an increase in the minimum wage, and also the Kennedy-Kassebaum health-care bill, which guaranteed the extension of insurance to workers who lost, or left, their jobs. "They were making all these deals with Clinton," lamented Dole, who resigned from the Senate to pursue his campaign and was hoping to campaign against gridlock. "And I'm thinking, Guys! Don't pass anything else! Don't throw me over!"

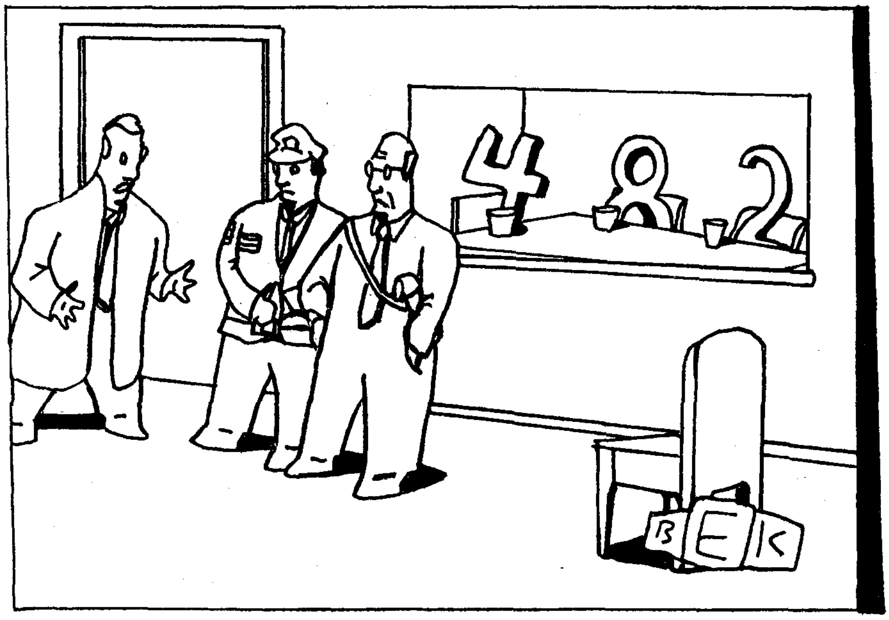
In the summer of 1996, the President asked Erskine Bowles, Mickey Kantor, and Vernon Jordan to start thinking about an agenda for his second term. The blueprint they produced was worthy, comprehensive, and, in some ways, ambitious. But there was no magic in it. Clinton was no longer a romantic visionary; he was a mechanic now, brilliant at the filigree work but less, somehow, than the fresh breeze promised in 1992.

He spent all of 1997 working on a balanced-budget agreement with the Republicans. The press spent much of 1997 obsessed with the Clinton-Gore fund-raising efforts in the campaign just ended. The Democrats had raised about four hundred million less than the Republicans, but they had done so using some unsavory characters—Johnny Chung, Charlie Trie, the Riady family, of Indonesia. Clinton's aggressive efforts had put him very close to the edge of legality and well past the borders of propriety (allowing major campaign contributors to buy access to the President and, in several cases, overnight stays in the Lincoln Bedroom).

In the process, the balanced-budget agreement—the first nominally balanced budget in thirty years—received little attention. But it was, in a way, the ultimate demonstration of the new Clinton. The real victory was not in the zero on the bottom line but in dozens of line-item skirmishes. Indeed, the President managed to gain approval for several new—and large—social programs that had been at the heart of his own wish list from the moment he had announced his intention to run for President. There was more than thirty billion dollars in new tax credits for higher education; in effect, this made the first two years of college a middle-class entitlement (by 1999, an astonishing ten million of the fourteen million eligible Americans would take advantage of this credit). There was also twenty-four billion dollars for a Children's Health Insurance Program that would, theoretically, provide insurance to most children whose parents could not afford it. In sum, Gene Sperling estimated, seventy billion dollars, over five years, went to families with incomes of less than thirty thousand dollars a year.

This was an achievement ignored by Clinton's critics on the left (who wanted bigger social programs) and on the right (who wanted less spending). "These aren't big pieces of legislation. These are scraps off the table," said Stephen Hess, of the Brookings Institution, in a typical complaint. "It ain't the G.I. Bill of Rights. It's not Social Security."

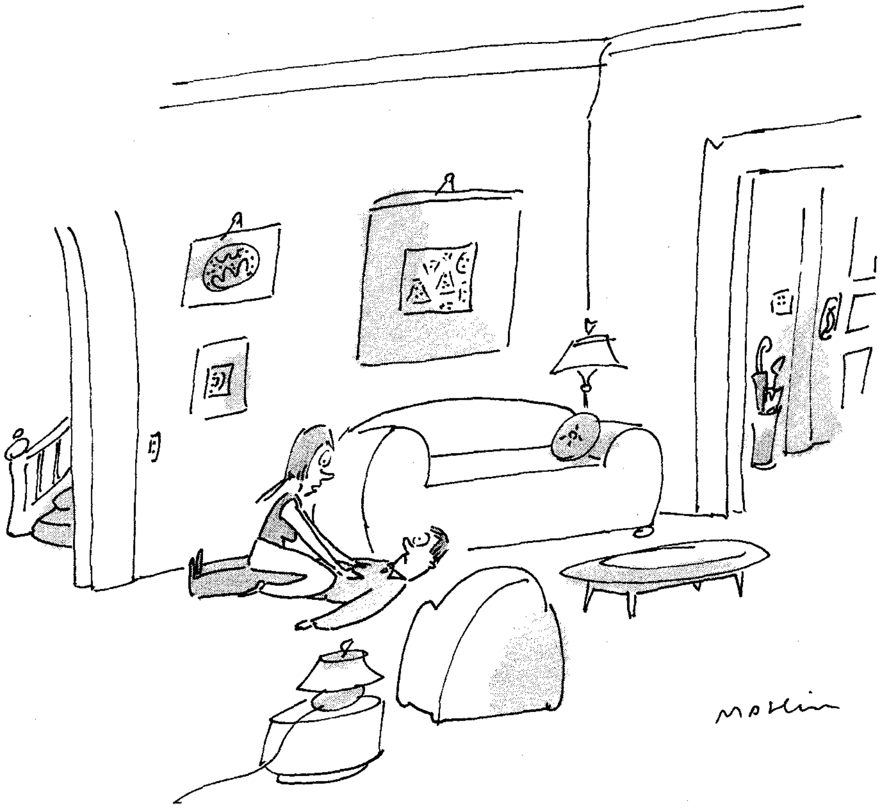
But the college tax-credit plan that was passed in 1997 affected more people than the original G.I. Bill of Rights, which applied only to returning Second World War veterans; and there was a poignant stubbornness in Clinton's efforts to fight the Republicans, line by line, through the budget each year. The President—who had the unfortunate habit of describing character as a "journey, not a destination"—had demonstrated, over time, that persistence was his strongest character trait. In this case, it was persistence of a high-minded sort—in the service of his political beliefs, not his ambition—and the result was perhaps the most important substantive achievement of his Presidency: a government that had dramatically improved the lives of millions of the poorest, hardest-working Americans.



"Look, the numbers don't lie."

SCANDAL’S CONSEQUENCE

A curious untold story of the Clinton years involves Ira Magaziner, who stayed on in the White House after the failure of his health-insurance plan, in 1994. "I was radioactive," he recalled. "But



"I knew C.P.R. wouldn't save our marriage, but I had to try."

the President asked me what I wanted to do next, focussing on the economy. One issue I proposed was to work on a set of rules to govern E-commerce on the Internet—which in 1995 barely existed. Basically, everyone, except for a few people on the economic team, laughed and said, 'Well, if Magaziner wants to do that, great!' "

Magaziner decided to reverse every procedural decision he had made with health care. The process would be transparent and bipartisan. He found Republican partners, like Representative Christopher Cox, of California. He published his proposed E-commerce protocol on the Web, and asked for suggestions; the protocol went through eighteen public revisions before it was approved and introduced by Bill Clinton, on July 1, 1997. Most striking, however, was the philosophy behind Magaziner's approach. It was firmly libertarian: anti-censorship and anti-tax. Indeed, Ira Magaziner became the unlikely father of the current moratorium on E-commerce sales taxes, a policy that was adopted internationally after Clinton proposed it.

It was also a policy that fit with Clinton's approach to other New Economy issues. The Administration didn't create the information technology boom of the nineties, of course; but it might have strangled it through overregulation, or by limiting competition (which was the course of action favored by many telecommunications-industry lobbyists, who are among the most powerful in Washington). Instead, the Clinton Administration forced new competitive markets in local and cellular phone service, and acted to insure that Internet access was as inexpensive as a local phone call.

The President didn't spend much time on high-tech issues; he left the detail work to Gore and others. Nor was he much interested in actually using the new technology himself; when he played golf with Bill Gates in 1994, the two men apparently had very little to talk about. At times, Clinton seemed more a figure from the past—a politician made to press the flesh, to give speeches in large halls and negotiate with his opponents in small rooms—than one in the vanguard of a new, Information Age politics. But his ability to grasp the changing economy and to describe the impact of that change on average Americans remained his greatest political strength, the reason the public trusted him even after he had demonstrated his personal untrustworthiness.

Bill Clinton's ability to talk, to empathize, to understand will doubtless endure as his most memorable quality. Senator Paul Wellstone, a liberal who believes that Clinton has lost a great opportunity for social action, tells a story about a friend, a schoolteacher named Denis Wadley, who was dying of cancer in 1994. "Denis was a political junkie," Wellstone recalled, "and I arranged for him to meet the President just before he died. We met, at the end of the day, at a local television station in Minneapolis. Clinton came right over to us, and he immediately sized up the situation: Denis didn't want to talk about his disease—he wanted to have a policy discussion. And the President stood there for forty-five minutes and gave Denis the gift of taking him seriously, listening to him, responding intelligently. He never mentioned the illness. It was an incredibly gracious act, entirely natural—effortless. This is the humanity that we haven't seen reflected in the policy area."

Wellstone's wistfulness seems universal among reasonable people across the political spectrum. There is a feeling of talent squandered, of a great opportunity wasted. Even many of Clinton's closest friends are disappointed by his performance as President; and yet when these people are asked what else the President might have accomplished, the answers are perfunctory: health insurance, most often; a more coherent foreign policy; more money for education, according to Robert Reich. But one senses that even if Clinton had achieved all this, the wistfulness would remain—in part because Clinton never faced a policy crisis significant enough to challenge his political gifts. He was President in a placid time; he never had the opportunity to achieve greatness.

The sense of failure is also, obviously, a result of the Lewinsky scandal. In time, the impeachment of Bill Clinton—a process that was allowed to drag on for six months, though its outcome was obvious from the start—is likely to be seen more as a consequence of the ex-

"How do I feel? I feel that your question is trivial, courts sensationalism, and is designed to appeal to appallingly base instincts. Additionally, it demeans my intelligence. Next question."

• •

tremism of the Republican Party, just as the impeachment of Andrew Johnson was, than as an act of principle or constitutional necessity. Among the more radical Republican leaders—like the House Majority Whip, Tom DeLay, of Texas—there was an intense desire to punish Clinton. This precluded the compromise that was privately favored by most members of Congress, and by much of the public as well: a vote of censure. The President escaped any official consequence, but his reputation will suffer, as did his Presidency.

I asked Clinton what had been the impact of the Lewinsky scandal on the substance of his Administration. At first, he said he wasn't sure; then he acknowledged that he might have been able to reform the Social Security and Medicare systems if he hadn't provided the Republicans—and the media—with an irresistible diversion. His failure to achieve Medicare reform was particularly galling: the outlines of a reasonable compromise—a system that would introduce competition to the notoriously inefficient and wildly expensive old-age health plan—had been prepared by Senator John Breaux and Representative Bill Thomas (Thomas was eventually replaced by Senator Bill Frist, a former surgeon, whose expertise helped modify some of Breaux-Thomas's weaker aspects). Under different political circumstances, the President might have negotiated a more tolerable version of this bill and created a bipartisan coalition to pass it. "That was the idea," one of Clinton's closest advisers says. "Breaux was our guy. We knew it was coming."

But the Breaux-Thomas proposal was unveiled in the spring of 1999, at a moment when the President could not afford to offend liberal Democrats in the House of Representatives. He opposed the plan, and lost all chance for Medicare reform. This ratified the greatest failure of his Administration: his inability to renovate the anachronistic, ever-more-expensive old-age entitlement programs and to create a new social safety net, including universal health insurance, appropriate to the Information Age. Indeed, Clinton will be remembered more for his willingness to exploit public fears about the loss of Social Security and Medicare than for his actions to reform them.

There were also serious foreign-policy consequences of the Lewinsky scandal. Just after Clinton finally admitted his relationship with Monica Lewinsky in sworn testimony to a grand jury, he decided to fire cruise missiles against several targets—guerrilla camps in Afghanistan, a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan allegedly linked to Osama bin Laden, whose terrorist network may have been responsible for the bombing of two United States Embassies. His decision to bomb Iraq, in response to Saddam Hussein's refusal to coöperate with weapons inspectors, came just as the House impeachment vote was taking place, in December of 1998. Both actions were ill-considered and ineffective; the Lewinsky scandal made the timing and motives of both seem questionable, at best. Also in 1999 the President risked a serious diplomatic breach with the Chinese when he delayed the normalization of trade relations, which his Administration had already negotiated—in part, to appease congressional Democrats who had voted against impeachment.

But even if Bill Clinton had been able to pass Medicare and Social Security reform, even if he hadn't behaved recklessly overseas—even if there had been no substantive consequences at all—the impact of Monica Lewinsky on his Presidency would have been devastating. It was not merely that he behaved badly; he behaved in a way that confirmed the worst suspicions about what sort of person he was. He had taken advantage of an employee; he had done so in a humiliating way; he had allowed himself to be seduced by a young woman who obviously would not be able to keep quiet about it. (In perhaps the most remarkable moment of his grand-jury testimony, Clinton said he assumed that Monica Lewinsky would not keep the secret.) His actions were often described as careless, but they seemed the opposite—purposeful and angry; self-indulgent and self-destructive.

No doubt, other leaders—many of those who are remembered as great and caring—were as selfish and as cynical as the Lewinsky scandal revealed Bill Clinton to be. But the public was spared the squalor; in this case, the President indulged himself knowing, on some level, that every last pitiful detail was likely to become part of his legacy. After all, his Presidency coincided with the arrival of technologies that made it possible for everyone to know almost everything, a phenomenon whose implications Clinton understood better than any of his peers, and which he often exploited.

From the start, he was too familiar for comfort. He volunteered that his marriage had "not been perfect." He said that he "didn't inhale." He answered a question, on MTV, about his underwear. Clinton could have said "None of your business" to all these inquiries, but he had a remarkably sophisticated appreciation of the power of vicarious intimacy; he knew that the President now lived in the kitchens and family rooms of the nation as surely as he lived in the White House. One wonders if this President—by snuggling so close, by polling every last public appetite, by trying so hard to please—lost much of his moral authority in the process, and well before Lewinsky. It is possible that the Clinton era will be remembered as the moment when the distance between the President and the public evaporated forever.

"I'm not sure that's such a bad thing," the President said toward the end of one of our conversations. "We need to demystify the job. It is a *job*. . . . There's a lot to be said for showing up every day and trying to push the rock up the hill. . . . If you're willing to win in inches as well as feet, a phenomenal amount of positive things can happen. . . . If you love your country and have something you want to do and you put together a good team, and you're willing to be relentless and exhaust yourself in the effort, the results will come."

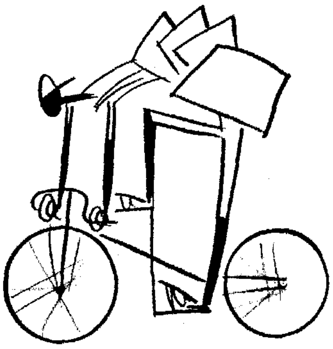
This seemed a peroration; it was, obviously, the way Bill Clinton wanted to be remembered. And there was a certain validity to it. He had conducted a serious, substantive Presidency; his policy achievements were not inconsiderable and had been accomplished against great odds. He had rescued the Democratic Party from irrelevance and had pursued a new philosophy of governance which made public-sector activism plausible once more, even in a time of national apathy and skepticism. Moreover, he had performed the most important service that a leader can provide: he had seen the world clearly and reacted prudently to the challenges he had faced; he had explained a complicated economic transformation to the American people and brought them to the edge of a new era. But he had hoped—indeed, he had expected—to do so much more.

RECESSIONAL

At fifty-four, Bill Clinton will be the youngest ex-President since Theodore Roosevelt. Upon leaving office, in 1908, Roosevelt—determined not to interfere with the Administration of his designated successor, William Howard Taft—went to Africa with his son, and the two killed five hundred and twelve animals, including seventeen lions, eleven elephants, twenty rhinoceroses, and nine giraffes. Then he returned home and destroyed Taft's Presidency, running against him in 1912; afterward, he maintained an extremely bitter public commentary on the new President, Woodrow Wilson. Indeed, it is fair to say that being an ex-President was the only job Teddy Roosevelt ever failed at.

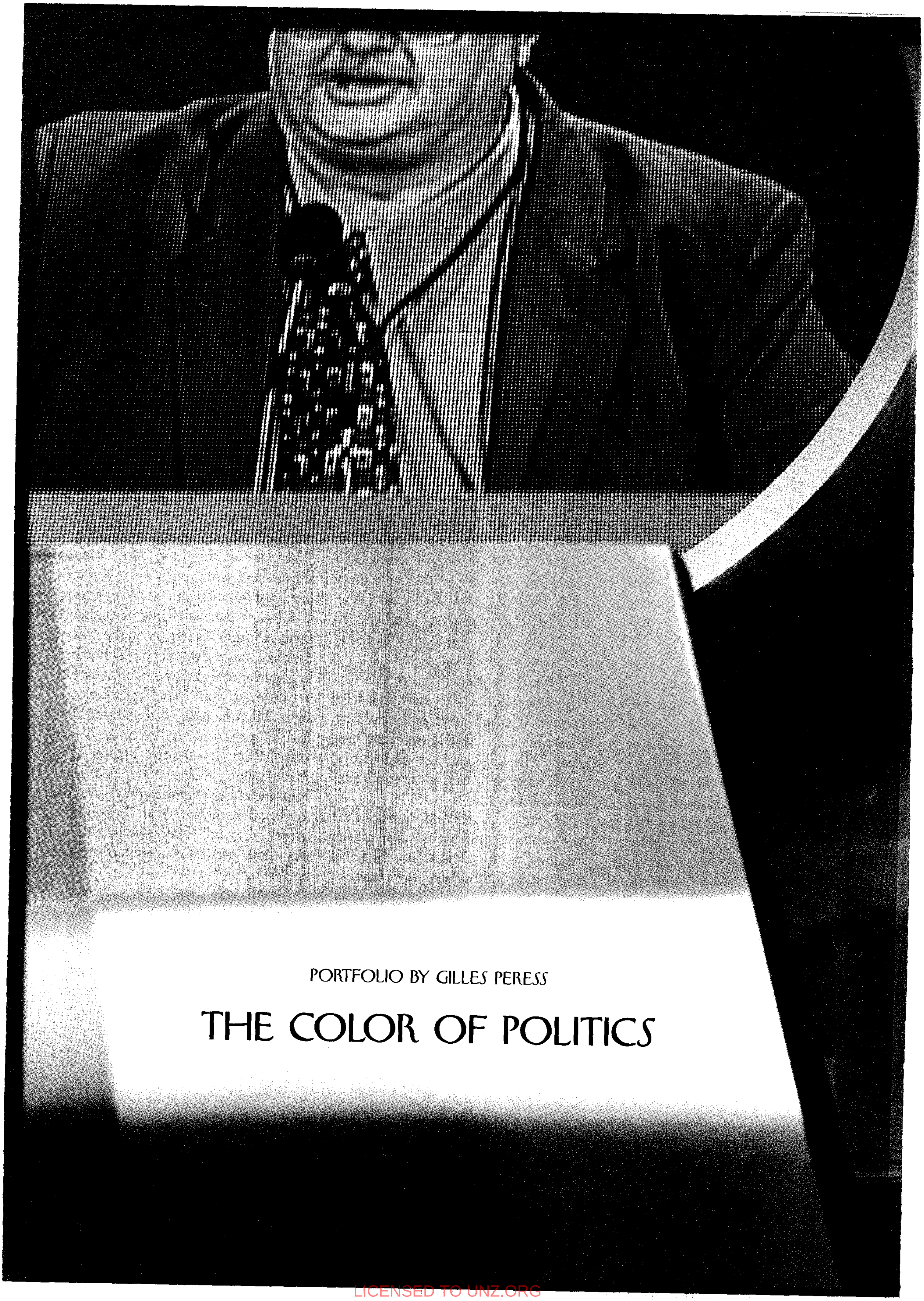
When I mentioned this to Clinton, he said, "I don't think the new President, whoever it is, will have problems with me acting like I wished I were still President." The President also said that he wasn't ready to discuss his specific plans for the future.

In mid-August, Clinton invited me to watch him begin his recessional: after speaking to the Democratic National Convention, in Los Angeles, we flew east to Monroe, Michigan, where he "passed the torch" to Al Gore. This proved to be the sort of strained, synthetic non-event that had often marred the Clinton Presidency; none of the principals seemed very comfortable. Clinton was pointedly restrained, not wanting to overshadow his Vice-President, but, as Gore began to speak, the President swept his arms around his wife and Tipper Gore, both of whom seemed reluctant to be hugged in camera range. The image was far more compelling than the Vice-President's rhetoric. (The actual torch-passing took place two days later, when Gore accepted the Party's nomination and introduced himself to the country on his own terms.)



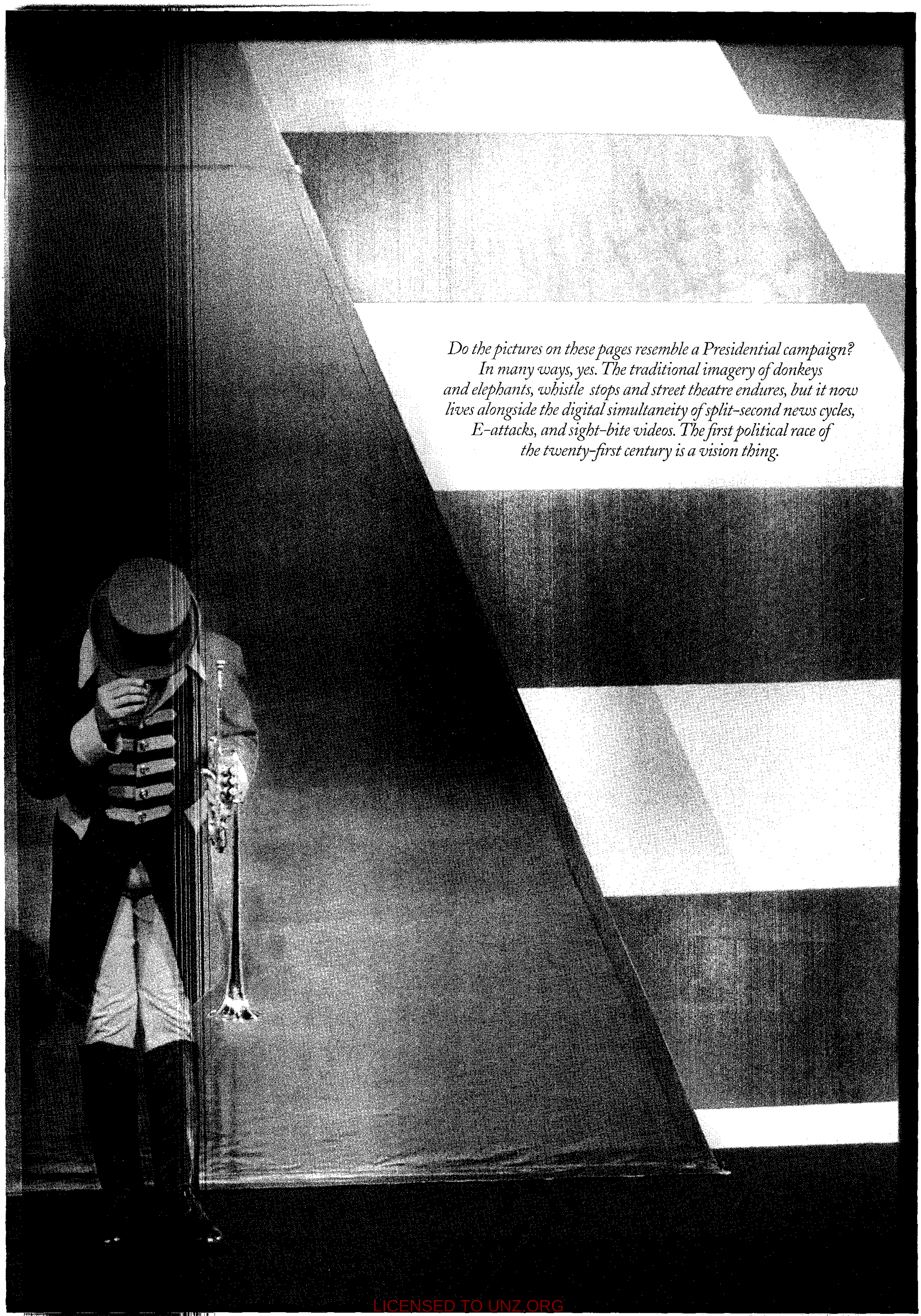
Afterward, flying back to Washington on Air Force One, the President admitted that he was tired—and he seemed so, distracted and perhaps a bit subdued after his rousing farewell to the Democrats the night before. He said that he wanted to talk more about foreign policy, but that turned out to be a perfunctory recitation of events he hadn't mentioned previously. After several unsuccessful attempts to engage him, I gave up and asked what his favorite moment as President had been. "Well, one of the things I'm thinking, sitting here with you now, is it seems like I just got inaugurated the first time, and I can't believe the eight years are gone." Putting his feet up on the arm of my chair and chewing on an unlit cigar, he began another litany of triumphs, filling dead air while searching for an insight. Then he recalled something that had happened at the event we'd just left. "When I was introducing Al, I started talking about the Hope Scholarship, and this guy in the crowd, over on my left, screams out, 'Yeah, I got one of those!' " he said. "I suppose in a funny way those personal encounters are the biggest highs I get."

On the road out of town, after the ceremony with Gore, the President had spotted a McDonald's and had been unable to resist. It was years since he'd actually been in one. Only the Presidential limousine and the first few Secret Service cars fit in the parking lot; the rest of the motorcade extended a quarter of a mile down the highway. There was chaos in the restaurant, of course, but the President was a study in nonchalance at the center of the whirlwind. As he stood at the counter waiting for his food (a crunchy chicken sandwich, a large drink, and a "ton" of fries, he said), he turned to me and added, with a chuckle, "If I'm going to be a citizen again, I'd better start acting like it." ♦

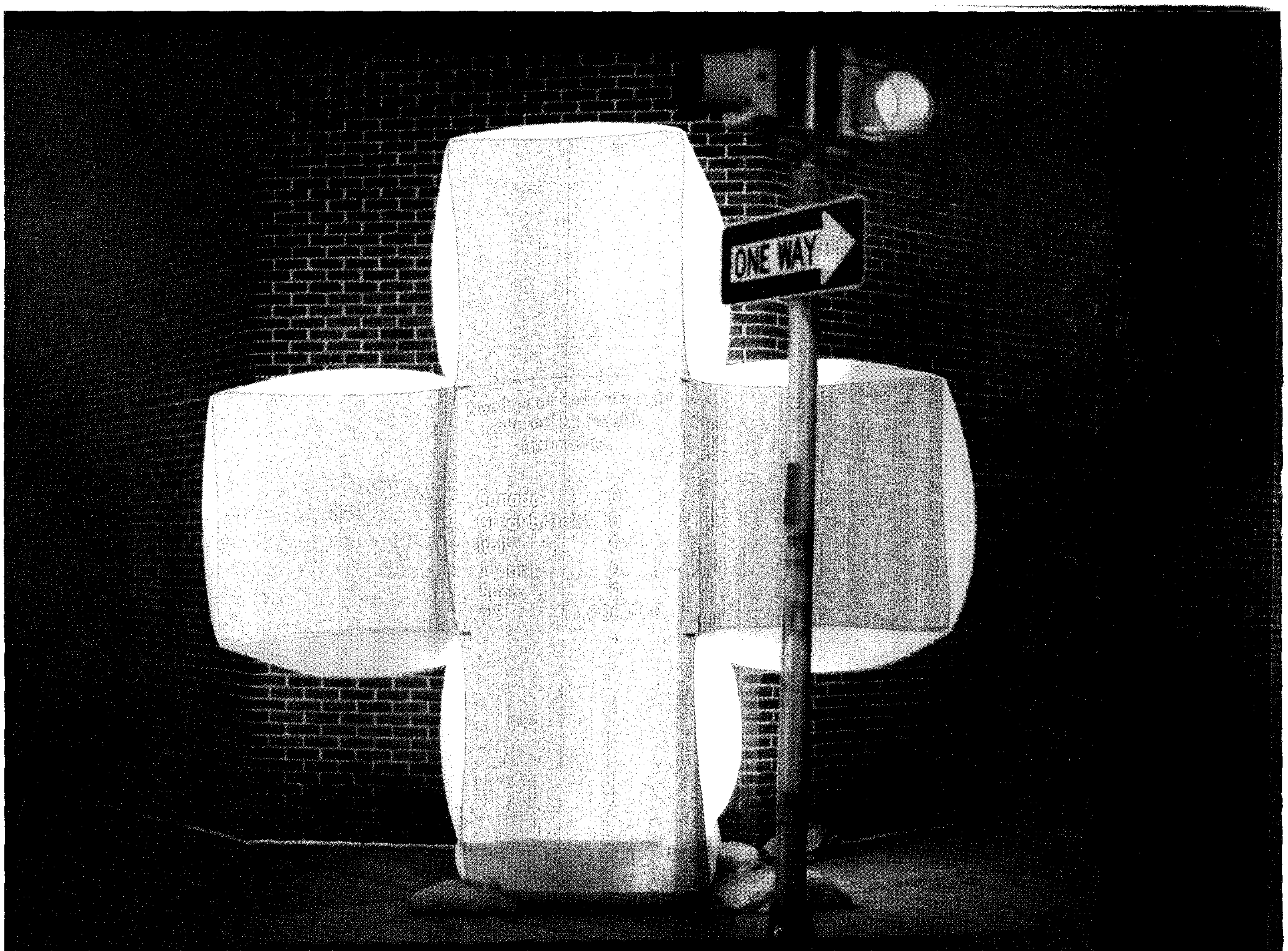


PORTFOLIO BY GILLES PERESS

THE COLOR OF POLITICS



Do the pictures on these pages resemble a Presidential campaign? In many ways, yes. The traditional imagery of donkeys and elephants, whistle stops and street theatre endures, but it now lives alongside the digital simultaneity of split-second news cycles, E-attacks, and sight-bite videos. The first political race of the twenty-first century is a vision thing.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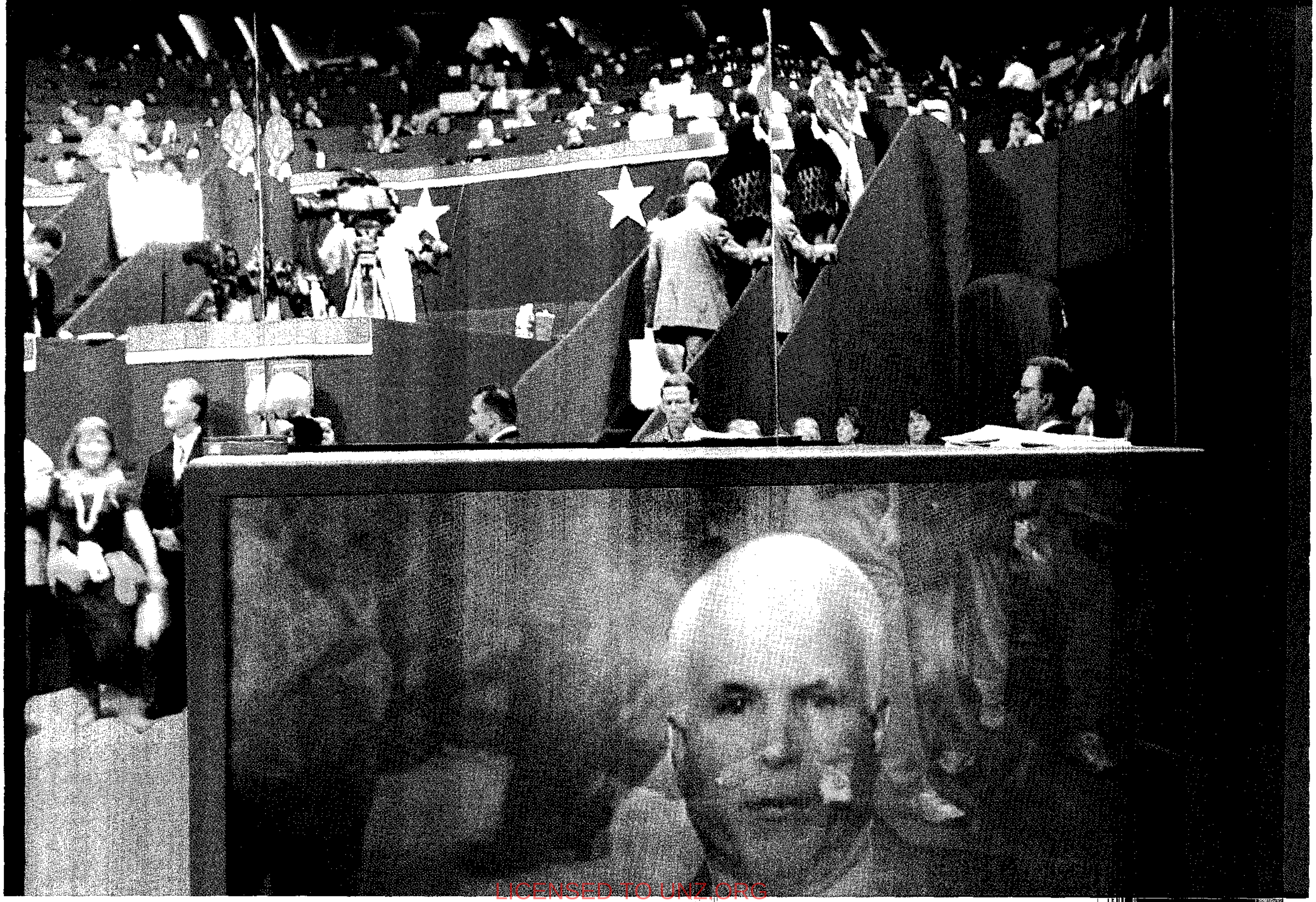

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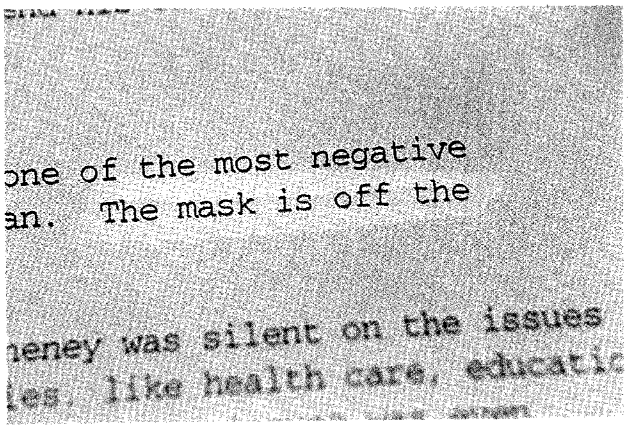

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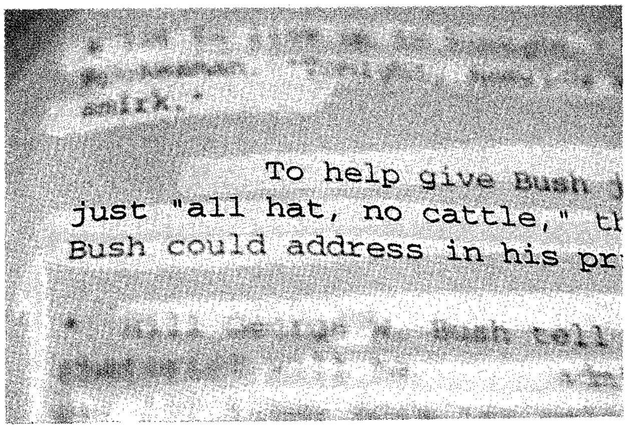

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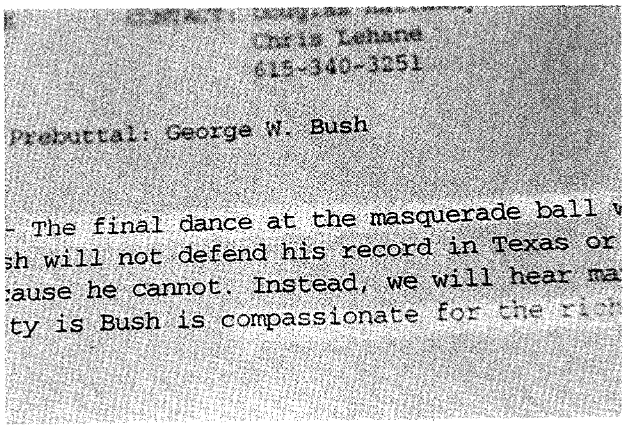

Chris Lehane
615-340-3251

Prebuttal: George W. Bush

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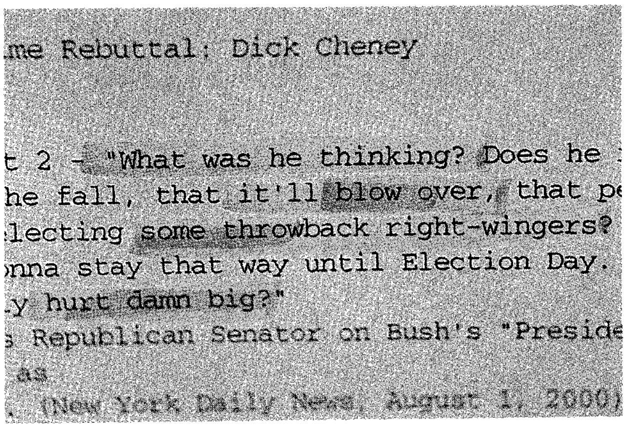

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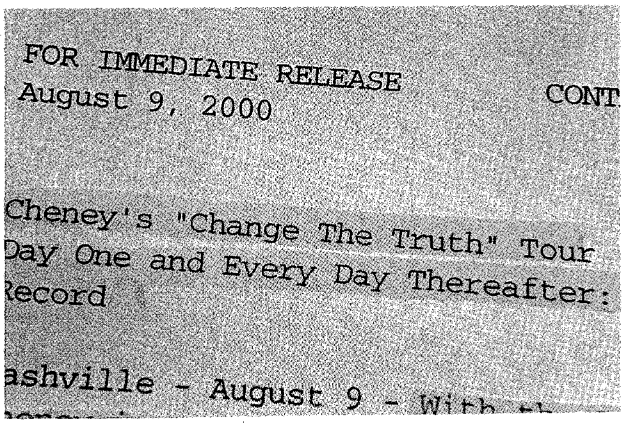

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August 9, 2000

CONT

Cheney's "Change The Truth" Tour
Day One and Every Day Thereafter:
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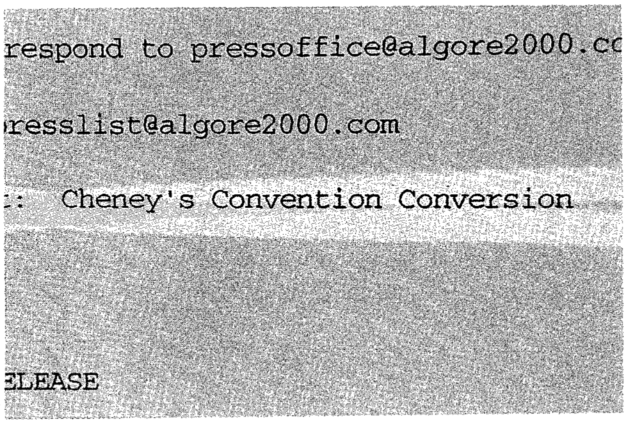

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: Cheney's Convention Conversion

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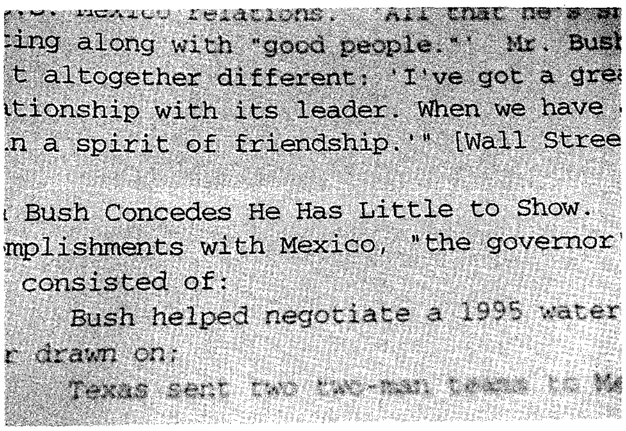

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Bush Concedes He Has Little to Show.
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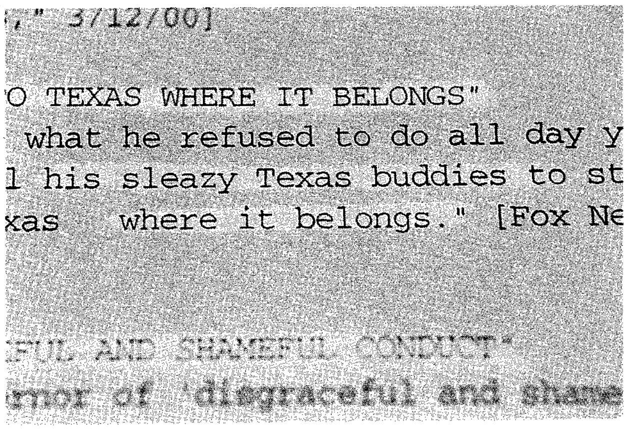

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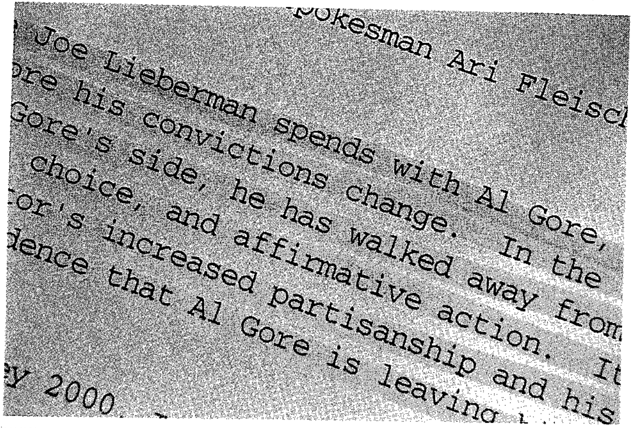

pokesman Ari Fleisc
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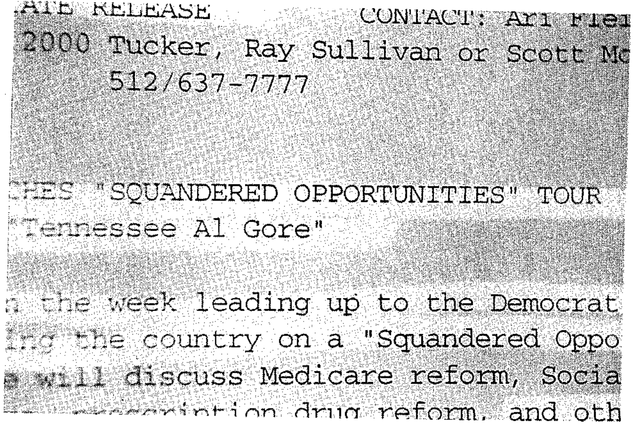

ATE RELEASE CONTACT: Ari Flei
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512/637-7777

CHES "SQUANDERED OPPORTUNITIES" TOUR
"Tennessee Al Gore"

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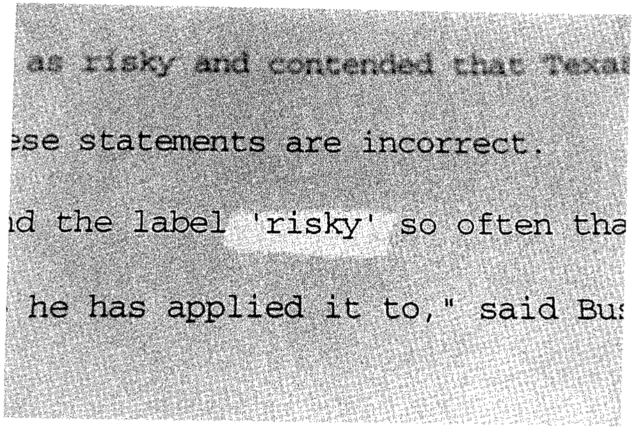

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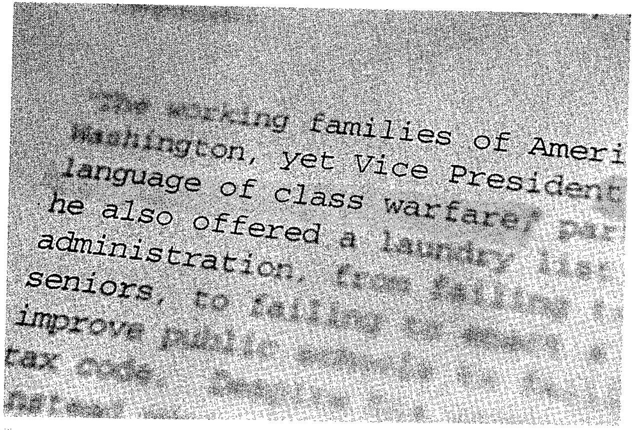

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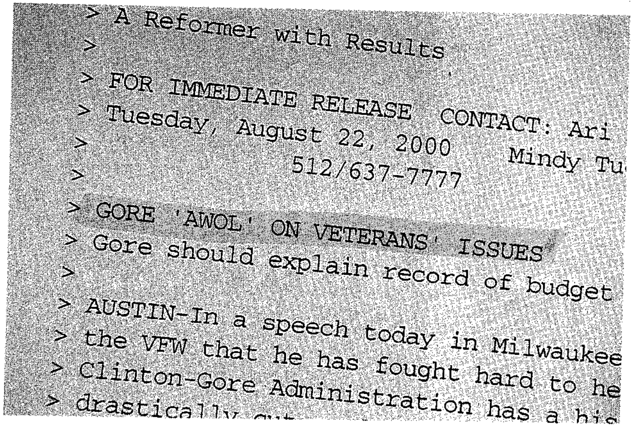

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> Tuesday, August 22, 2000 Mindy Tu
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> 512/637-7777
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> GORE 'AWOL' ON VETERANS' ISSUES
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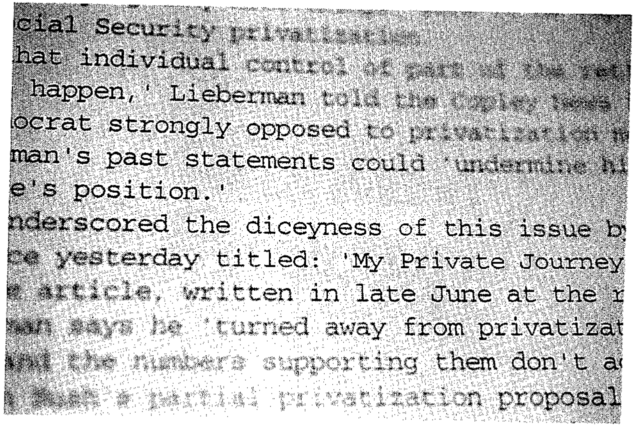

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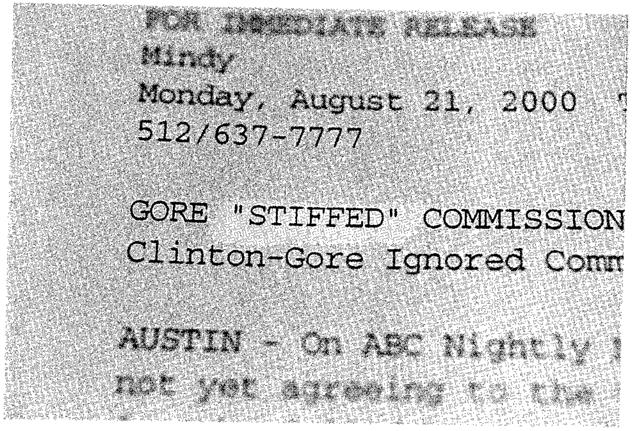

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GORE "STIFFED" COMMISSION
Clinton-Gore Ignored Comm

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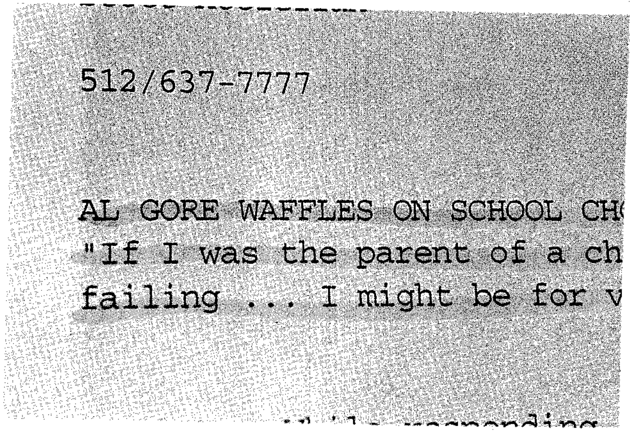

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"If I was the parent of a ch
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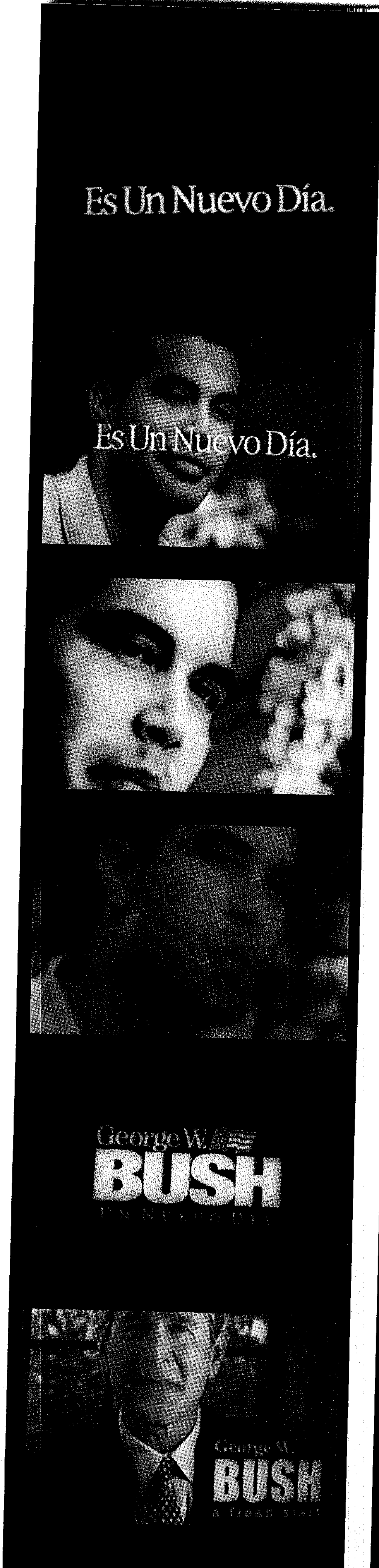
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George W.
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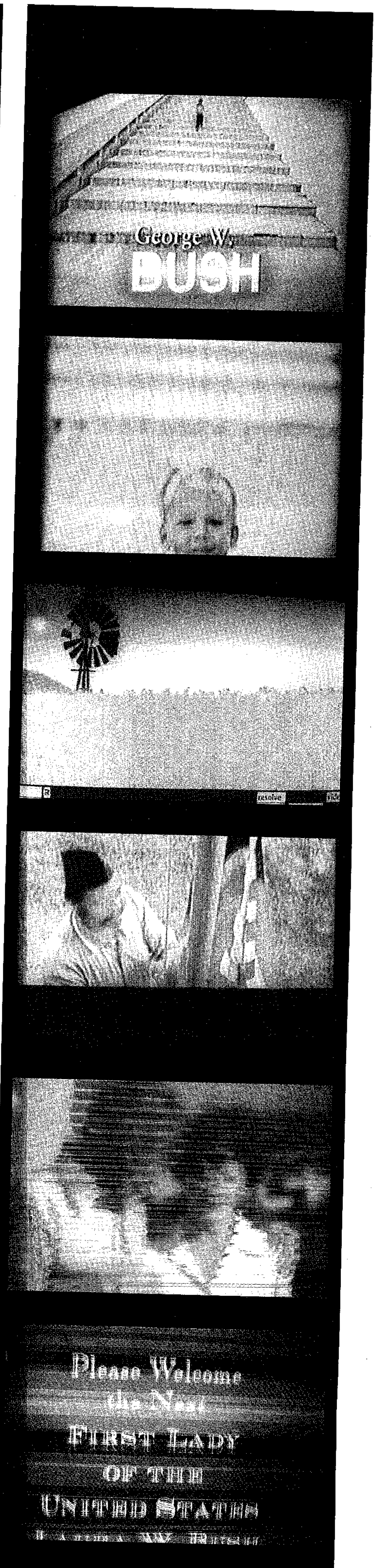
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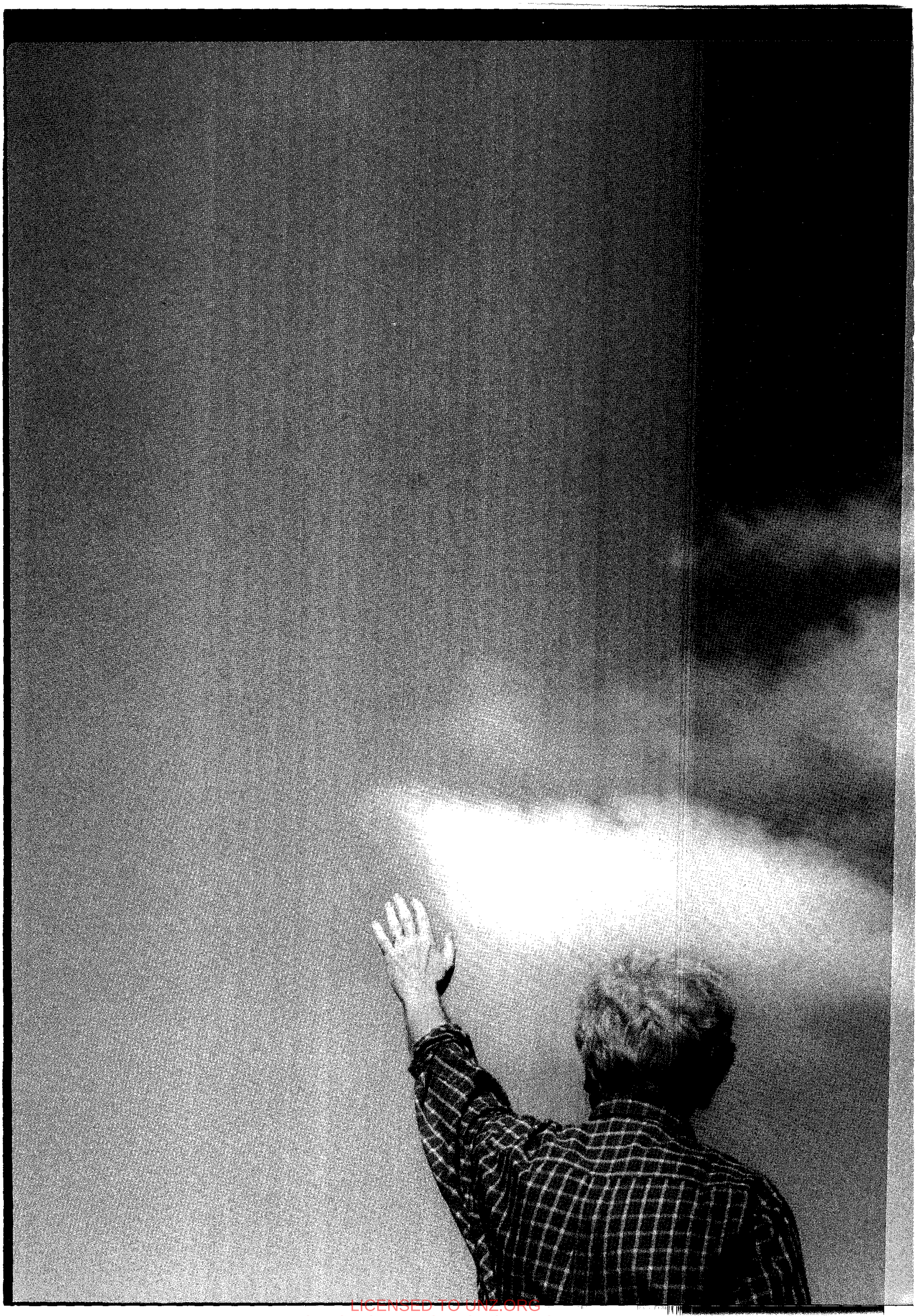

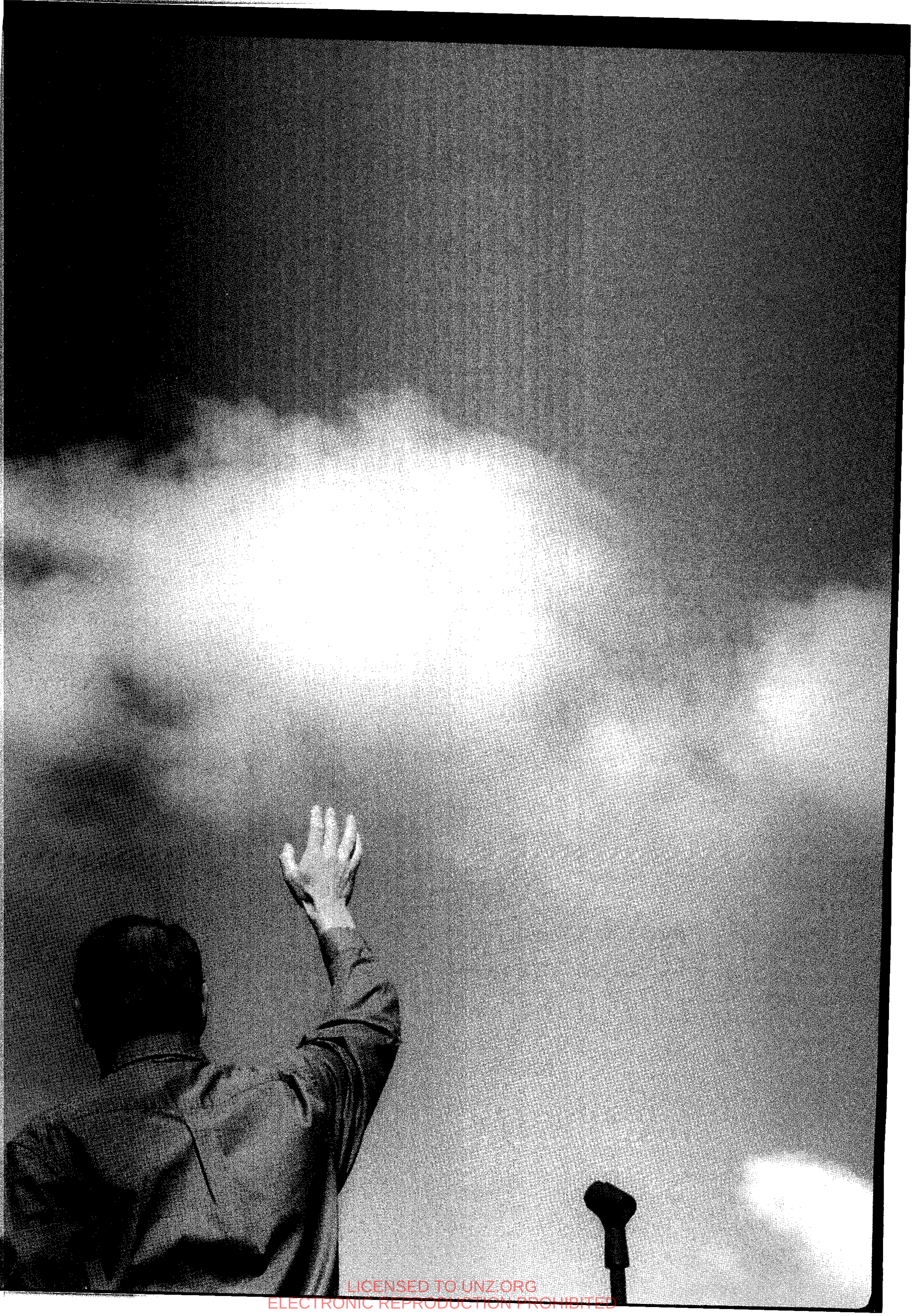

FICTION

RANCH GIRL

BY MAILE MELOY

If you're white, and you're not rich or poor but somewhere in the middle, it's hard to have worse luck than to be born a girl on a ranch. It doesn't matter if your dad's the foreman or the rancher—you're still a ranch girl, and you've been dealt a bad hand.

She's the foreman's daughter. She grew up on Ted Haskell's Running-H cattle ranch, in the foreman's house, on the dirt road between Haskell's place and the barn. There are two bedrooms with walls made of particleboard, one bathroom (no tub), muddy boots and jackets in the living room, and a kitchen that's never used. The front door is painted with Haskell's brand—an H slanted to the right—and for a long time she didn't know that an H normally stands up straight. No one from school ever visits the ranch, so she's kept her room the way she decorated it at ten: a pink comforter on the bed, horse posters on the walls, plastic horse models on the shelves. There's a cow dog with a ruined hip, a barn cat who sleeps in the rafters, and, until he dies, a runt calf named Minute, who cries at night outside the front door.

She helps her dad when the other hands are busy: wading after him into an irrigation ditch, or rounding up a stray cow-calf pair. Her mother used to help, too—she sits a horse better than any of the hands—but then she took an office job in town, and bought herself a house to be close to work. That was the story, anyway; her mom hasn't shown up at the ranch since junior high. Her dad works late now, comes home tired and opens a beer. She brings him cheese and crackers, and watches him fall asleep in his chair.

Down the road, at the ranch house, Ted Haskell grills steaks from his cows every night. He's been divorced for years, but he's never learned how to cook anything except grilled steak. Whenever she's there to visit Haskell's daughter Carla, who's in her class at school, Haskell tries to get her to stay for dinner. He says that she's too thin and that a good beefsteak will make her strong. But she doesn't like leaving her dad alone, and Haskell's joking embarrasses her, so she walks home hungry.

When she's sixteen and starts going out at night, Haskell's ranch house is the best place to get ready. Carla has her own bathroom, with a big mirror, where they curl their hair into ringlets and put on blue eyeshadow. She and Carla wear matching Wranglers, and when it gets cold she wears knitted gloves with rainbow-striped fingers that the boys love to look at when they get drunk out on the Hill.

The Hill is the park where everyone stands and talks after they get bored driving their cars in circles on the drag. The cowboys are always on the Hill, and there's a fight every night; on a good night, there are five or six. On a good night, someone gets slid across the asphalt on his back, T-shirt riding up over his bare skin. It doesn't matter what the fights are about—no one ever knows—all that matters is that Andy Tyler always wins. He's the one who slides the other guy into the road. Afterward, he gets casual, walks over with his cowboy-boot gait, takes a button from the school blood drive off his shirt (and he always seems to have a button), and reads it aloud: "'I Gave Blood Today,'" he says. "Looks like you did, too," and then he pins the button to the other guy's shirt. He puts his jean jacket back on and hides a beer inside it, his hand tucked in like Napoleon's, and smiles that invincible smile of his.

"Hey," he says. "Do that rainbow thing again."

She waves her gloved hands in fast arcs, fingers together so the stripes line up.

Andy laughs, and grabs her hands, and says, "Come home and fuck me."

But she doesn't. She walks away. And Andy leaves the Hill without saying goodbye, and rolls his truck in a ditch for the hundredth time, but a buddy of his dad's always tows him, and no one ever calls the cops.

Virginity is as important to rodeo boys as it is to Catholics, and she doesn't go home and fuck Andy Tyler because, when she finally gets him, she wants to keep him. But she likes his asking. Some nights, he doesn't ask. Some nights, Lacey Estrada climbs into Andy's truck, dark hair bouncing in soft curls on her shoulders, and moves close to Andy on the front seat as they drive away. Lacey's dad is a doctor, and she lives in a big white house where she can sneak Andy into her bedroom without waking anyone up. But cowboys are romantics; when they settle down they want the girl they haven't fucked.

When Haskell marries an ex-hippie, everyone on the ranch expects trouble. Suzy was a beauty once; now she's on her third husband and doesn't take any shit. Suzy reads tarot cards, and when she lays them out to answer the question of Andy Tyler, the cards say to hold out for him.

On the spring cattle drive, she shows Suzy how to ride behind the mob and stay out of the dust. Suzy talks about her life before Haskell: she has a Ph.D. in anthropology, a police record for narcotics possession, a sorority pin, and a ski-bum son in Jackson Hole. She spent her twenties throwing dinner parties for her first husband's business clients—that, she says, was her biggest mistake—and then the husband ran off with one of her sorority sisters. She married a Buddhist next. "Be interesting in your twenties," Suzy says. "Otherwise you'll want to do it in your thirties or forties, when it wreaks all kinds of havoc, and you've got a husband and kids."

She listens to Suzy talk and says

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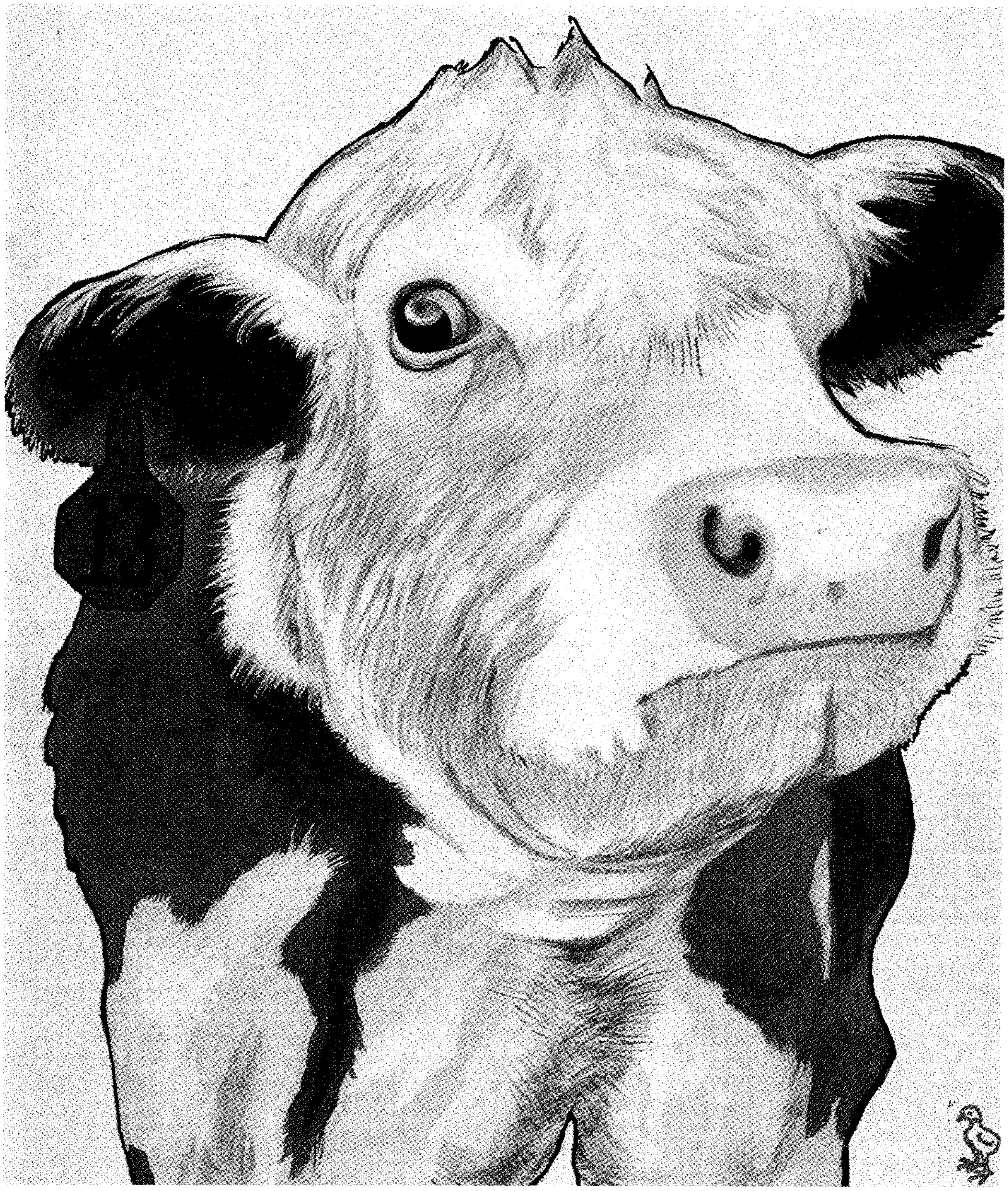
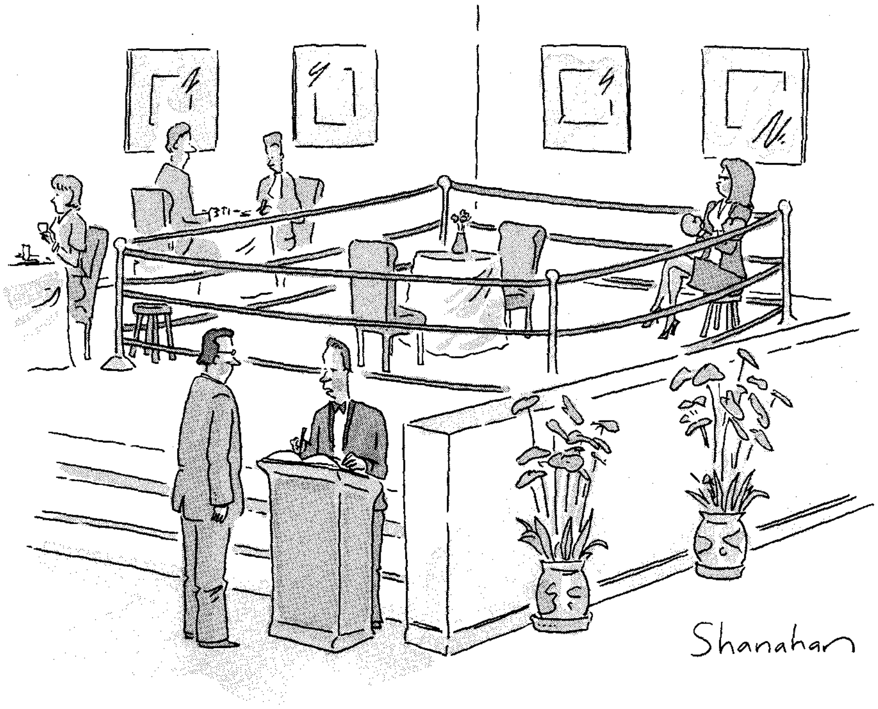


nothing. What's wrong with a husband and kids? A sweet guy, a couple of brown-armed kids running around outside—it wouldn't be so bad.

There's a fall cattle drive, too, but no one ever wants to come on it. It's cold in November, and the cows have scattered in the National Forest. They're half wild from being out there for months, especially the calves, who are stupid as only calves can be. The cowboys have disappeared, gone back to college or off on binges or to other jobs. So she goes out with her dad and Haskell, the three of them sweating in their heavy coats as they chase down the calves, fighting the herd back to winter pasture before it starts to snow. But it always snows before they finish, and her dad yells at her when her horse slips on the wet asphalt and scrapes itself up.

In grade school, it's O.K. to do well. But by high school, being smart gives people ideas. Science teachers start bugging her in the halls. They tell her Eastern schools have Montana quotas, places



"She's expecting you."

• •

for ranch girls who are good at math. She could get scholarships, they say. But she knows, as soon as they suggest it, that if she went to one of those schools she'd still be a ranch girl—not the Texas kind who are débutantes and just happen to have a ranch in the family, and not the horse-farm kind who ride English. Horse people are different, because horses are elegant and clean. Cows are mucusy, muddy, shitty, slobbery things, and it takes another kind of person to live with them. Even her long, curled hair won't help at a fancy college, because prep-school girls don't curl their hair. The rodeo boys like it, but there aren't any rodeo boys out East. So she comes up with a plan: she has to start flunking. She has two and a half years of straight A's, and she has to flunk quietly, not to draw attention. Western Montana College, where Andy Tyler wants to go, will take anyone who applies. She can live cheap in Dillon, and if things don't work out with Andy she already knows half the football team.

When rodeo season begins, the boys start skipping school. She'd skip, too, but the goal is to load up on D's, not to get kicked out or sent into counselling. She paints her nails in class and follows the rodeo circuit on weekends. Andy rides saddle bronc, but his real event is bull riding. The bull riders have to be a little crazy, and Andy Tyler is a little crazy. He's crazy in other ways, too: two years of asking her to come home and fuck him have made him urgent about it. She dances with him at the all-night graduation party, and he catches her around the waist and says he doesn't know a more beautiful girl. At dawn, he leaves for spring rodeo finals in Reno, driving down with his best friend, Rick Marcille, and she goes with Carla to Country Kitchen in a happy fog. She orders a chocolate shake and thinks about dancing with Andy. Then she falls asleep on Carla's bedroom floor, watching cartoons, too tired to make it down the road to bed.

Andy Tyler calls once from Reno, at 2 A.M. She answers the phone before it wakes her dad. Andy's taken second place in the bull riding and won a silver belt buckle and three thousand dollars. He says he'll take her to dinner at the Grub Stake when he gets home. Rick Marcille shouts "Ro-*day*-o!" in the background.

There's a call the next night, too. But it's from Rick Marcille's dad. Rick and Andy rolled the truck somewhere in Idaho, and the doctors don't think Rick will make it, though Andy might. Mr. Marcille sounds angry that Andy's the one who's going to live, but he offers to drive her down there. She doesn't wake her dad; she just goes.

The doctors are wrong. It's Andy who doesn't make it. When she gets to Idaho, he's already dead. Rick Marcille is paralyzed from the neck down. The cops say the boys weren't drinking, that a wheel came loose and the truck rolled, but she guesses the cops are just being nice. It's her turn to be angry, at Mr. Marcille, because his son will live and Andy is dead. But when they leave the hospital, Mr. Marcille falls down on his knees, squeezing her hand until it hurts.

At Andy's funeral, his uncle's band plays, and his family sets white doves free. One won't go, and it hops around the grass at her feet. The morning is already hot and blue, and there will be a whole summer of days like this to get through.

Andy's obituary says he was engaged to Lacey Estrada, which only Lacey or her doctor father could have put in. If she had the guts, she'd buy every paper in town and burn them outside the big white house where Lacey took him home and fucked him. Then Lacey shows up on the Hill with an engagement ring and gives her a sad smile as if they've shared something. If she were one of the girls who gets in fights on the Hill, she'd fight Lacey. But she doesn't; she looks away. They'll all be too old for the Hill once school starts, anyway.

At Western, in the fall, in a required composition class, her professor accuses her of plagiarism because her first paper is readable. She drops his class. Carla gets an A on her biology midterm at the university in Bozeman. She's going to be a big-animal vet. Her dad tells everyone, beaming.

But the next summer, Carla quits college to marry a boy named Dale Banning. The Bannings own most of central Montana, and Dale got famous at the family's fall livestock sale. He'd been putting black bulls on Herefords when everyone wanted purebreds. They said he was crazy, but at the sale Dale's crossbred black-baldies brought twice

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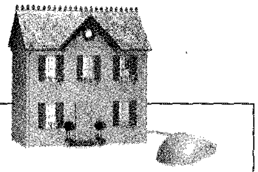

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what the purebreds did. Dale stood around grinning, embarrassed, like a guy who'd beaten his friends at poker.

Carla tells her about the engagement in Haskell's kitchen, and says she'll still be working with animals, without slogging through all those classes. "Dale's never been to vet school," Carla says. "But he can feel an embryo the size of a pea inside a cow's uterus."

She's heard Dale use that line on girls before, but never knew it to work so well. Carla's voice has a dreamy edge.

"If I don't marry him now," Carla says, "he'll find someone else."

In his head, Haskell has already added the Banning acreage to his own, and the numbers make him giddy. He forgets about having a vet for a daughter, and talks about the wedding all the time. If Carla backed out, he'd marry Dale himself. For the party, they clear the big barn and kill a cow. Carla wears a high-collared white gown that hides the scar on her neck—half a Running-H—from the time she got in the way at branding, holding a struggling calf. Dale wears a string tie and a black ten-gallon hat, and everyone dances to Andy's uncle's band.

Her mother drives out to the ranch for the wedding; it's the first time she's seen her parents together in years. Her dad keeps ordering whiskeys and her mother gets drunk and giggly. But they sober up enough not to go home together.

That winter, her dad quits his job, saying he's tired of Haskell's crap. He leaves the foreman's house and moves in with his new girlfriend, who then announces he can't stay there without a job. He hasn't done anything but ranch work for twenty-five years, so he starts day riding for Haskell again, then working full-time hourly, until he might as well be the foreman.

When she finishes Western, she moves into her mother's house in town. Stacks of paperwork for the local horse-racing board cover every chair and table, and an old leather racing saddle straddles an arm of the couch. Her mother still thinks of herself as a horsewoman, and buys unbroken thoroughbreds she doesn't have time or money to train. She doesn't have a truck or a trailer, or land for pasture, so she boards the horses and they end up as big, useless pets she never sees.

Summer evenings, she and her mother sit on the front step and eat ice cream with chocolate-peanut-butter chunks for dinner. She thinks about moving out, but then her mother might move in with her—and that would be worse.

She isn't a virgin anymore, thanks to a boy she found who wouldn't cause her trouble. He drops by from time to time, to see if things might start up again. They don't. He's nothing like Andy. He isn't the one in her head.

She drives out to see Carla's baby when Carla leaves Dale and moves back home to the Running H. It feels strange to be at the ranch now, with the foreman's house empty and Carla's little boy in the yard, and everything else the same.

"You're so lucky to have a degree and no kid," Carla says. "You can still leave."

And Carla is right: She could leave. Apply to grad school in Santa Cruz and live by the beach. Take the research job in Chicago that her chemistry professor keeps calling about. Go to Zihuatenejo with Haskell's friends, who need a nanny. They have tons of room, because in Mexico you don't have to pay property tax if you're still adding on to the house.

But none of these things seem real; what's real is the payments on her car and her mom's crazy horses, the feel of the ranch road she can drive blindfolded, and her dad needing her in November to bring in the cows.

Suzy lays out the tarot cards on the kitchen table. The cards say, Go on, go away. But, she thinks, out there in the world you get old. You don't get old here. Here you can always be a ranch girl. Suzy knows. When Haskell comes in wearing muddy boots, saying, "Hi, baby. Hi, hon," his wife stacks up the tarot cards and kisses him hello. She pours him fresh coffee and puts away the cards that say go. ♦

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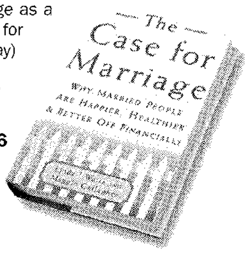
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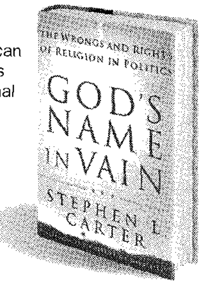
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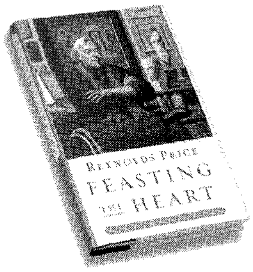
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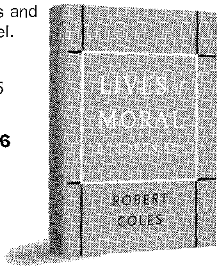
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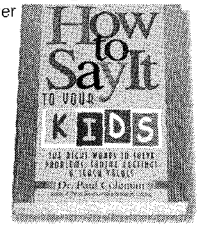
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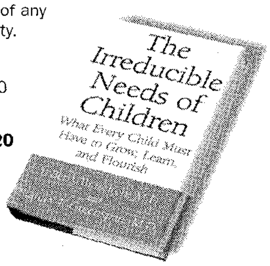
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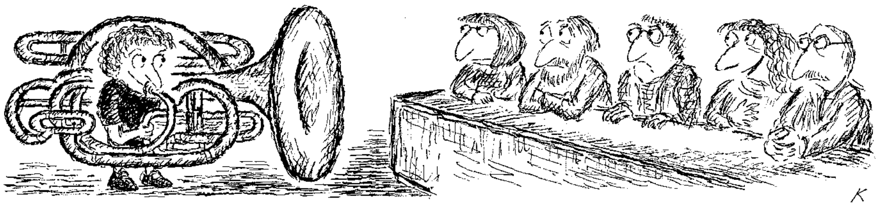

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

WHY THEY WERE FAB

The geopolitical significance of Beatlemania.

BY LOUIS MENAND

Dr. Billy Graham made it a rule to abstain from television on the Christian Sabbath, but on February 9, 1964, he granted himself a special dispensation in order to watch the Beatles' first appearance on "The Ed Sullivan Show." "They're a passing phase" was his assessment afterward. "All are symptoms of the uncertainty of the times and the confusion about us."

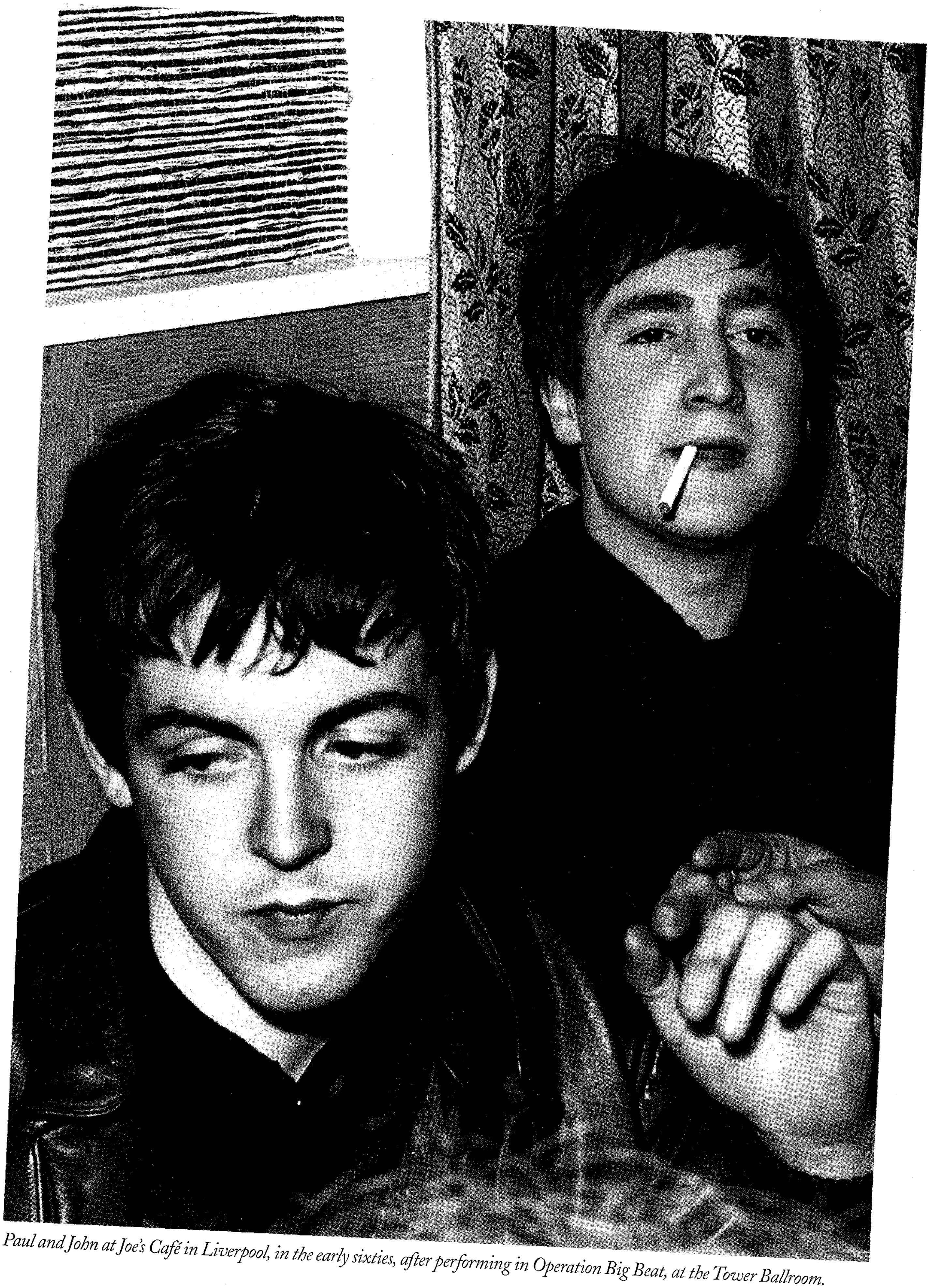
The Beatles would not have disagreed. They had been in the business a long time before they went on "Ed Sullivan," and even if a mordant suspicion of the motives of strangers had not been deeply rooted in their personalities, which it was, they also had a fairly developed sense of the freakish nature of stardom. In October, 1963, when Beatlemania was first sweeping Britain, John was asked how long he thought the group would last. "About five years," he said. It was a good guess. The Beatles finished what most of them regarded as their last complete group effort, the record known as the White Album, in October, 1968. They broke up in September of the following year.

It was not that the Beatles were humble people. They were happy to clown around in public, but they did not like being taken for fools, even a little, and they were extremely quick to detect a put-down. They had attitude; it was their genius to clothe it with wit. They were too smart to be surly. "The French have not made up their minds about the Beatles," a BBC interviewer told John shortly before the band left for America. "What do you think of them?" "Oh, we like the Beatles," said John. "They're gear." The famous press conference at Kennedy Airport a month later, right after the group got off the plane, was an impromptu tour de force. Every question served up in the hope of making a Beatle seem stupid or self-important came right back with spin on it. "Will you sing something?" was the first question. "No," they all cried as one. "We need money first," said John. "How do you account for your success?" they were asked. "We have a press agent." "What do you think of Beethoven?" "I love him," Ringo said. "Especially his poems." If Elvis Presley had had a month to think about it, he could not have come up with that line.

"We have a press agent" is the perfect reply to a reporter who asks why you are successful, because that is pretty much what the reporter already thinks, and in the beginning nothing was more critical to the Beatles' popularity than their talent for disarming the press. They were being taken seriously by grownups at the *Times* and, yes, *The New Yorker* when they were still writing love songs for twelve-year-olds. The Beatles knew how the game was played, and their instinct for where the boundaries were drawn was close to infallible. The reason John was distressed after he was quoted in the *Evening Standard*, in 1966, as saying that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus was not so much that he had been misinterpreted. (He had, in fact, been misinterpreted: he meant only that Christianity, too, is a passing phase—he was responding, in effect, to Billy Graham.) He was distressed because the news media had picked up the story and run with it. It was the first time since the triumph on "Ed Sullivan" that the press had seemed interested in making a Beatle look bad. The Beatles could read the signs, and the belief that they had played out the string in their relations with the mainstream media was one of the reasons they gave up touring later that year.

In private, they didn't trouble to remove the barbs. "Nobody liked to be rounded upon by the four of them—in however jokey a way," the man who had the ambiguous fortune of actually being the Beatles' press agent, Derek Taylor, remembered. "It was not pleasant for those four buggers to be at you. It was 'whoosh'—and all the fangs were in you at once. It didn't last, but it was very painful." It wasn't a matter of a bunch of pop stars too important to be civil to their entourage. The Beatles had always been that way. In 1962, after they had been turned down by virtually every label in England, George Martin, at Parlophone, agreed to record them. Parlophone was owned by EMI, a premier British record company, and Martin was the director of the label, a trained musician, and the soul of professional courtesy and accommodation. When the Beatles turned up for their first recording session, he explained carefully how he intended to proceed, and told them to let him know if there was anything they didn't like. "Well, for a start," said George, "I don't like your tie." There was a beat before Martin laughed. It was one of those moments when the universe is poised to plunge down a completely different path.

Martin went on to produce every record the Beatles made. He scored nearly all the music played on those records by other musicians (since none of the Beatles knew how to read or write music), he performed on several songs himself, and he came up with many of the special effects that got albums like "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" talked about as masterpieces. Martin believed that Lennon and Mc-



Paul and John at Joe's Café in Liverpool, in the early sixties, after performing in Operation Big Beat, at the Tower Ballroom.

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Cartney were geniuses, and he thought he knew how to give them the sound they were looking for; but he was not under any illusions about where he stood in the band's affections. "The Beatles were never ones for showing concern about, or gratitude towards, anyone else," he wrote, many years after the group broke up, in his autobiography. Fortunately, he didn't seem to mind. "They had an independent, cussed streak about them, not giving a damn for anybody, which was one of the things I liked about them in the first place, and one of the factors that made me decide to sign them."

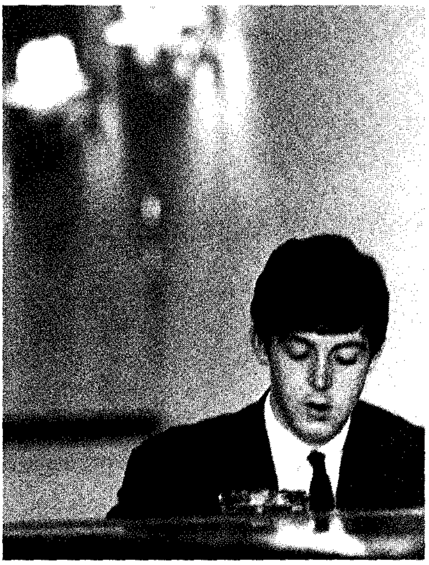
The Beatles never forgot that they were from Liverpool, a town considered provincial even in England, and that no one in a suit had ever shown them any respect until Brian Epstein discovered them, in 1961, playing to lunch-hour crowds in a former vegetable warehouse called the Cavern Club, and offered to become their manager. They always felt they had something to prove. "Although we didn't openly say, 'Fuck you!,' " George said, "it was basically our thing: 'We'll show these fuckers.' And we walked right through London . . . and kept on going through Ed Sullivan and on to Hong Kong and the world." "Fucking big bastards, that's what the Beatles were," John told *Rolling Stone*, a year after the breakup. "You have to be a bastard to make it, and that's a fact. And the Beatles were the biggest bastards on earth." The Beatles were kings in an era when "love" was the great totem before which the entire culture bowed down. They sang of love, they were loved by millions, "lovableness" was the essence of their appeal. But they loved only each other.

LEFT: PAUL SALTZMAN/CONTACT; COURTESY APPLE CORPS LTD.

"The Beatles Anthology" (Chronicle; $60) is the third, and presumably final, entry in the surviving Beatles' mammoth chronicle of the band's career. It follows the six-CD compilation of archival recordings (mostly outtakes) that was released in 1995 and 1996, and the eight-part video that was broadcast in 1995—both also called "The Beatles Anthology." The book is an oral history (with lots of pictures), almost entirely in the words of the Beatles themselves. John's contributions are pieced together from interviews given at various times in his life. After the breakup, John said some unfriendly things about his former associates, and a few of the nastier bits have been silently elided from the passages quoted in the book. Lennon fans who have not stopped hating Paul may take offense, but the editing seems fair. John still has his edge. Most of the other material is new (in the sense that it has not previously been published), though some is culled from earlier interviews, and there are a few excerpts from interviews with or books by Derek Taylor, George Martin, Brian Epstein (who died in 1967, from an overdose of sleeping pills), and the Beatles' road managers, Neil Aspinall and Mal Evans (who died in 1976 from bullet wounds inflicted by the Los Angeles police).

Does the book tell us anything new about what we really want to know, which is (besides, of course, who broke up the Beatles): What accounted for the

Beatles' success? It takes a little work to find an answer, and one of the reasons is that oral history is an extremely unsatisfactory genre. Oral history isn't really history; it's just the raw data of history, a big pile of file cards with no one around to do the synopsis. And in the case of "The Beatles Anthology" we are dealing with a history dictated and controlled entirely by its subjects and their employees—in other words, with a public-relations document. The surviving Beatles are circumspect people, they have been rehearsing their pet anecdotes for decades, and they have every reason to wish to appear comfortable with one another and pleased with what they accomplished back in the days when the moon was in the seventh house and Jupiter (if I am remembering this correctly) aligned with Mars. "No longer together, but still good friends" is the general message. The consequence is that if one of them tells a story—say, of the band's first appearance on "Ed Sullivan"—each of the other Beatles is given equal space to present his version of the same episode. Since there are almost no interesting discrepancies among the versions, you find yourself reading every story four times. This makes for a long book, heavy on the politesse. It has a distinctly "for the record" air about it.



The Beatles themselves did not have a theory to explain their success beyond the belief, very much in evidence in "The Beatles Anthology," that chemistry had a lot to do with it. "All of our hearts," as Ringo puts it, "were beating at the same time." And it's true that the flip side of their indifference to everyone else was their absorption in one another. They didn't just tour together and record together. They went to clubs together, they hung out in one another's houses, they took their vacations together. If John had nothing to do, he got in the Rolls and drove over to Ringo's. John, Paul, and George had been together since they were teen-agers. In Hamburg, where they started out playing seven- and eight-hour sets every night of the week to crowds of German gangsters, drunken sailors, and off-duty strippers, they lived in the same room for months. The night George lost his virginity, John and Paul were pretending to be asleep. When he was finished, they applauded.

So if one of the Beatles wanted to go to Rishikesh and meditate with the Maharishi, they all went to Rishikesh. (Ringo brought along a suitcase filled with canned beans. He was dubious about the cuisine.) When John was under attack for his remark about Jesus, they all felt obliged to show up at the press conference to deal with it. None of the Beatles considered themselves technically great musicians, but once they had conquered America they believed that they were the best band in the world. At a time when most pop groups consisted of a featured performer and his backups (Gerry and the Pacemakers, Herman's Hermits, the Dave Clark Five), the Beatles were a team. Beatlemania just deepened their mutual dependency. Suddenly, the whole world had gone crazy, and the only sane people left in it were the Beatles themselves: they were the only people around who did not think that the supreme joy of human life was to touch a Beatle. They became one another's reality check. "When I feel

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my head start to swell," John once said, "I look at Ringo—then I know we're not superhuman."

It would be a mistake to call the Beatles' intimacy unnatural, because natural is exactly what it was. Nobody planned it. For five years, the gears simply happened to mesh. The smartest thing Brian Epstein did (besides, with the urging of George Martin, replacing the band's original drummer, Pete Best, just before the Beatles made their first record) was to resist the temptation to make John the star—and Epstein probably had a crush on John. He ended up getting four stars for the price of one. In the last pages of "The Beatles Anthology," there is the usual agonized brooding over the question of who broke up the Beatles, but the answer is obvious. John broke up the Beatles, because he finally found someone he cared about more than Ringo. (And she didn't care about Ringo at all.) That, too, was a natural development.

Well, that's one theory. George Martin never bought it. He thought that the Beatles were mainly John and Paul, and that George and Ringo were replaceable sidemen. Martin thought he was replaceable, too, for that matter—that any competent producer could have recorded the Beatles. It is a revoltingly unsentimental view, but there is something to be said for it. What *was* almost preternatural about the Beatles was that the two best pop-song writers of their generation also happened to be the two best pop vocalists of their generation, grew up essentially around the corner from each other, and ended up working in the same band. When the Beatles started out, it was almost unheard of for singers to write songs, and at first even Martin was reluctant to let them record their own material. But they insisted, and their success changed the industry. The Rolling Stones and the Who, the other big British bands of the sixties, began writing songs only after they saw the Beatles doing it. Elvis never wrote a song in his life. It was simply not the way he conceived of his job. He was an interpreter.

No doubt Lennon and McCartney stimulated each other, and no doubt they were stimulated by some of the musicians *they* stimulated—Bob Dylan, Donovan, the Beach Boys. (The Beatles got

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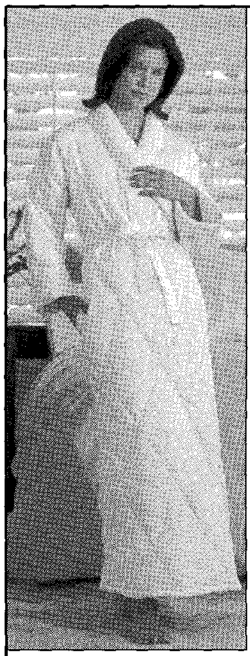
along with the Rolling Stones, and swanned around with them in the days of Swinging London, but they regarded the Stones as imitators. "I think Mick's a joke, with all that fag dancing, I always did," John said later. "Every fucking thing we did, Mick does exactly the same.") But how the well got dug from which those songs were drawn is a mystery. It wasn't the quantity; it was the range. Lennon and McCartney could write teenybopper hits like "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "She Loves You," and they could write hippie anthems like "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Hey Jude." But they also wrote classic, unforgettable pop. In one twelve-month period, August 6, 1965, to August 5, 1966, they released three albums containing, among other songs: "Help!," "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away," "Another Girl," "In My Life," "It's Only Love," "I've Just Seen a Face," "Drive My Car," "Eleanor Rigby," "Norwegian Wood," "Nowhere Man," "Good Day Sunshine," "Run for Your Life," "Girl," "Michelle," "For No One," "Got to Get You Into My Life," "Here, There and Everywhere," and "Yesterday." Ten months later, they released "Sgt. Pepper." In the long run, the haircuts and the album covers and the comic antics will grow stale—they seem antique already—but the songbook will remain. And the songbook was written by Lennon and McCartney.

But the Beatles were also—Billy Graham was right—a passing phase. They crossed the world's path at a particular moment, and at particular moments it is usually the particulars that matter the most. The London *Times*, in 1963, may have noted with enthusiasm that the Aeolian cadence at the end of the Beatles' "Not a Second Time" was the same chord progression with which Gustav Mahler had closed "Das Lied von der Erde," but the pubescent girls screaming hysterically at Paul and throwing jelly beans at George (who, in an ill-considered moment, had let it be known that he liked them) did not know an Aeolian cadence from cream cheese, or care. They liked the haircuts.

The only thing that ever shocked the Beatles was their success in America. They simply couldn't understand the American response to their music, because they had made their living be-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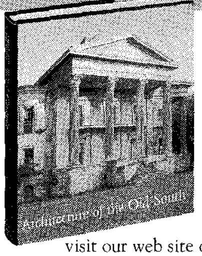
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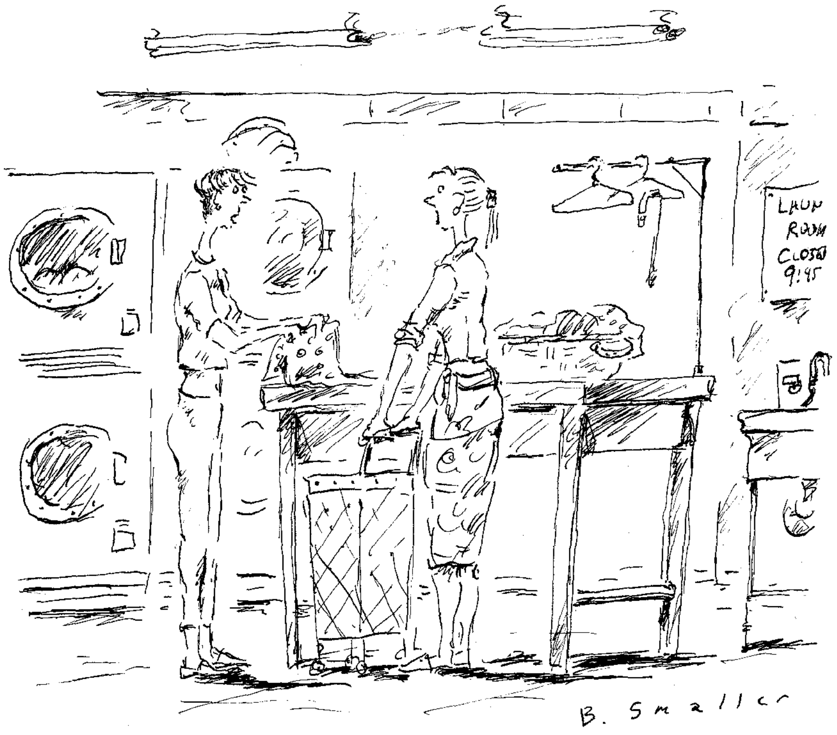
fore 1964 almost entirely by imitating American musicians. Each of them had started trying to make music in 1956, the year Elvis Presley achieved his famous crossover from "rhythm and blues," the American music industry's term for popular music performed by blacks, to "pop," music that was charted separately and was performed predominately by whites. The Beatles all loved Elvis, and they all loved the black performers Elvis helped bring into the mainstream—Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Fats Domino, the Isley Brothers. They loved the white performers who followed Elvis into the market he had opened up—Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran, Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers. They even loved the country-and-Western singers, like Carl Perkins, whose style Elvis grew up on and whose songs (like "Blue Suede Shoes") he made into huge pop hits.

The great advantage of growing up in Liverpool (as all the Beatles said) was that it was a port city, and the local sailors brought American records home with them. Liverpool teen-agers treasured these recordings, and the Beatles learned how to play their instruments by listening to the songs over and over and trying to work out the chords. Musicianship was measured by one's mastery of American songs. Paul was invited to become a member of the Quarry Men, John's original band, because he knew all the verses to an Eddie Cochran song called "Twenty Flight Rock." This was the repertoire the Beatles were hired to play in Hamburg when they went there in 1960; and, because they had to fill seven or eight hours every night, they found themselves learning entire albums' worth of songs. They chose the name Beatles because they thought it sounded like the name of Buddy Holly's band, the Crickets. (They thought "Crickets" was a clever pun; they were disappointed later on to learn that Buddy Holly had never heard of cricket.)

There were other British bands that played Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry songs, but not many. There was no commercial radio in Britain, only the BBC—kids listened to American records over Radio Luxembourg or on pirate broadcasts from offshore ships—so the market was wide open, and the Beatles figured, not unrealistically, to clean up in it. They were imitators and interpreters, too, and as accomplished in their own way as Elvis was in his. Their version of the Isley Brothers' "Twist and Shout" is generally regarded as definitive. Paul, especially, was an excellent mimic, and by the time the Beatles



"He said that he is socially liberal and fiscally conservative, but what he meant is that he sleeps around and is cheap."

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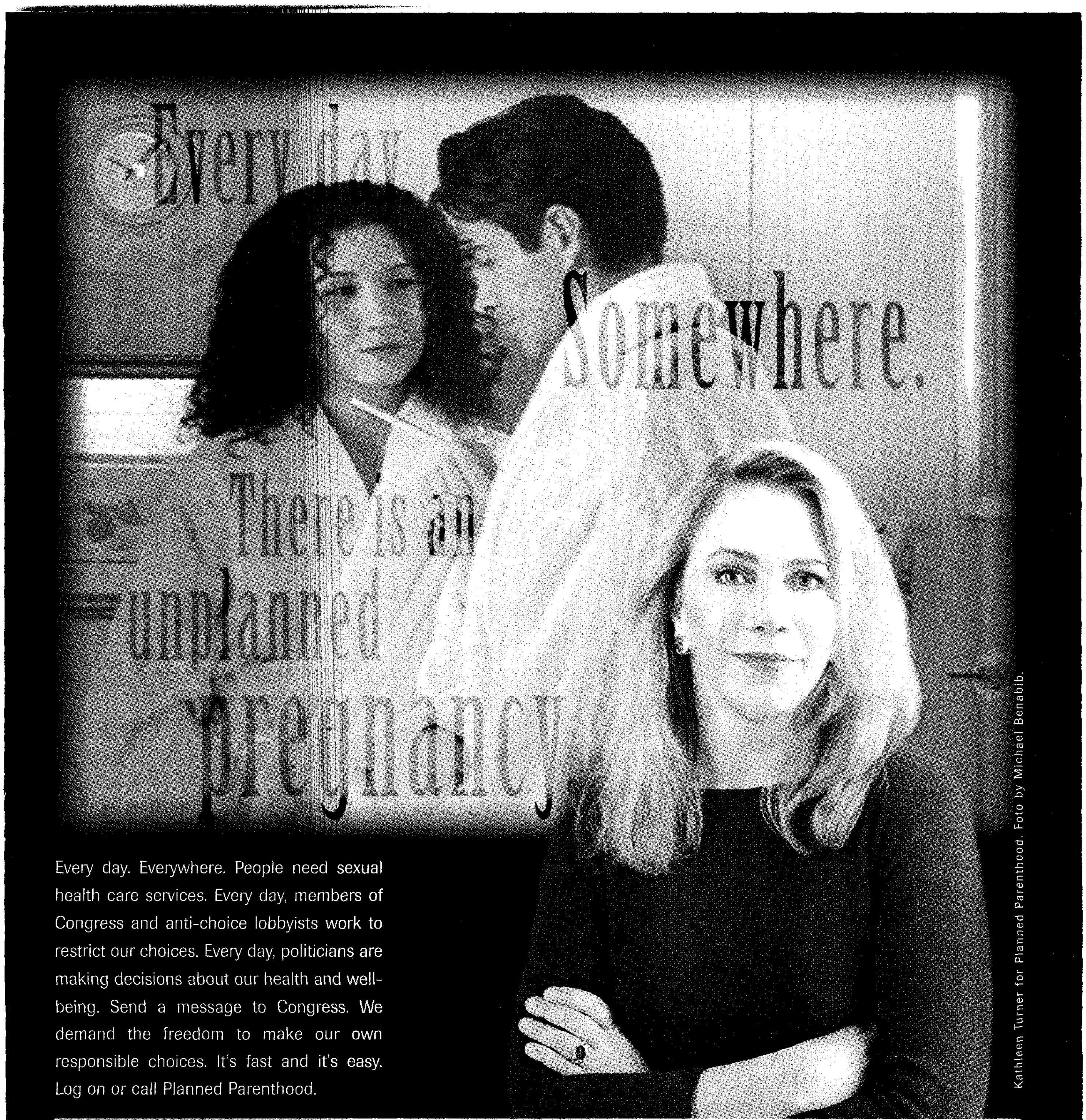

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THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA 67

The blotches ran well down the sides of his face and his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. But none of these scars were fresh. They were as old as erosions in a fishless desert.

Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the
same colo

"Santia ank from
where the n. We've
made some

The old oved him.

"No," t Stay with
them."

"But re at fish and
then we ca

"I reme t leave me
because yo

"It was bey him."

"I know

"He has

"No," t

"Yes," t rrace and
then we'll

"Why n

They sa ade fun of
the old man and he was not angry. Others, of the older fishermen,
did not show it and they spoke

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started recording with Parlophone they had a huge repertoire of all the American popular genres except gospel and folk (some of which you can hear on the double-CD set "The Beatles: Live at the BBC," released in 1994). About half the numbers on their first British albums were covers of American songs. In short, the Beatles started out thinking that they were bringing American music to Europe. But they ended up doing something they quite reasonably considered absurd. They ended up bringing American music to America.

The industry term for the type of music Presley had more or less created was, of course, "rock and roll," which, in the beginning, translated as "black music performed by white people." Its cultural standing was not high. "Rock 'n' roll smells phony and false," Frank Sinatra observed in 1957. "It is sung, played, and written for the most part by cretinous goons and by means of its almost imbecilic reiteration, and sly, lewd, in plain fact, dirty lyrics . . . it manages to be the martial music of every sideburned delinquent on the face of the earth." Elvis was shown the magazine article in which these remarks appeared and was invited to comment. "You can't knock success," he said. He knew what he was talking about. That year, sales of products licensed by Elvis Presley grossed twenty million dollars. Sinatra got the message, and when Presley returned from his two-year hitch in the Army, in 1960, his first public performance was on a Frank Sinatra television special, at Sinatra's invitation. Frank offered his rendition of "Love Me Tender."

This was respect, but it was respect for a market, not for the product, and by the time the Beatles arrived, in February, 1964, the rock-and-roll component of the American pop scene was nearly moribund. Presley was making a fortune acting in movies universally ridiculed by reviewers, and releasing albums like "Blue Hawaii." He had already started the long decline toward his fat period. Little Richard had quit music in 1957 to become a preacher; Chuck Berry had nearly gone to jail on a morals charge; Jerry Lee Lewis had married his thirteen-year-old cousin; Gene Vincent had been badly injured in a car accident; Eddie Cochran and Buddy Holly were dead. A payola scandal had tarnished the music

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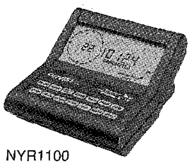

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industry and disrupted its hit-making mechanism (which involved, in fact, payola). The No. 1 album in America was "The Singing Nun." Ed Sullivan knew what he was doing, therefore, when he introduced the Beatles, during their second appearance on his show, as "four of the nicest youngsters we've ever had on our stage." Their style of rock and roll was upbeat; they did not snarl or gyrate; they carried no ethnic baggage; grownups seemed to like them. They were exotic and familiar at the same time. They were the saviors of their own business.

But although the Beatles aspired to the American popular-musical tradition they had grown up on, that was the only American thing about them. They acquired most of their sartorial style in Germany, where they were taken up by a small group of artists and intellectuals who called themselves the Exis, for "existentialists." The haircuts were the inspiration of one of the Exis, Astrid Kirchherr, a photographer who became the girlfriend of a member of the original Beatles, Stuart Sutcliffe; the collarless jackets were Pierre Cardin knockoffs; the vaguely Spanish-style boots came from a shop in London, Anello & Davide. And the humor, of course, was purely English. One of the reasons George Martin took the joke about his necktie in stride was that before he met the Beatles he had built up his label producing British comedy acts. He made records with Peter Ustinov, Peter Sellers, and the Goons. He produced the cast album of "Beyond the Fringe." He discovered Flanders and Swann. So he understood the Beatles' spoofy manner right away, and he managed to work its flavor into their records.

In the United States, the Beatles therefore "read" not as would-be Americans but as Europeans. They were not intellectuals—they were not any better educated than most American pop singers—but they were, by American standards, sophisticates, and they were therefore people intellectuals could take seriously. The Beatles figured this out almost the minute they arrived. "When we got here, you were all walking around in fucking Bermuda shorts, with Boston crew cuts and stuff on your teeth," as John later pointed out. "The chicks looked like fucking 1940 horses. There was no conception of dress or any of that jazz. We just thought, 'What an ugly race.' It looked just disgusting." They knew they didn't need to keep imitating American rock and roll to make their mark. They had landed in a culture starved for style. Style they had.

In rescuing American popular music, the Beatles also gave it, for the first time, a bit of a brow. They made rock and roll seem not only respectable but significant. Suddenly, all the music that had been ignored by the middlebrow press, or dismissed by academic sociologists as pabulum for the masses, became a lot more interesting. Songs that once seemed hokey and meretricious were revealed to be profoundly expressive of the American style and spirit. Once people started writing seriously about "Not a Second Time" and "Good Day Sunshine" (a work Leonard Bernstein especially admired), they found they could write seriously about "Blue Suede Shoes" and "Hound Dog," too. Elvis Presley inspired the Beatles, but the Beatles invented Elvis Presley.

It is not without significance that the Beatles flourished in the middle years of the Cold War. Their appeal has always been explained as part of a general reaction against the Cold War mentality; their arrival seemed to many people to represent the moment Americans finally overcame the anxious conformity of the nineteen-fifties. No doubt that is a view to which the Beatles themselves would happily have subscribed. But their effect was to help create the myth of a great indigenous American popular culture, the popular culture that was one of the secret weapons of the Cold War, and that now seems on its way to becoming the culture of the whole world. John Lennon and Paul McCartney did for American music what François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard did for American film: they validated it for a culturally insecure people. We're not insecure anymore. We exported a mass-market commercial culture to Europe in the nineteen-fifties and got back a hip and smart popular art form in the nineteen-sixties. And we're happy now to pretend it's ours. ♦

BLOCK THAT METAPHOR!

From the Eugene (Ore.) Register-Guard.

The coattails of a successful favorite son can serve as a ladder to lift all with access into the perfumed White House atmosphere of perks and power.

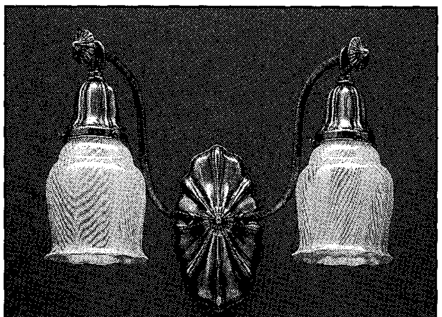
BRIEFLY NOTED

One Drop of Blood, *by Scott L. Malcomson (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $30).* In this sprawling book, Malcomson tracks with a Melvillean intensity the "unbidden yet unstoppable" evolution of racial categorization in the United States. He argues that the notion of race that evolved from the European settlers' encounters with Indians and black slaves eventually came to determine our national self-image. Close readings of history tease out the manifold ironies and contradictions of the subject (Abraham Lincoln calling for the band to play the minstrel tune "Dixie" the morning after General Lee's surrender), and lead Malcomson to a more personal, haunted reminiscence of his childhood in post-civil rights Oakland and a dawning awareness of his own whiteness.

The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, *by H. W. Brands (Doubleday; $35).* Like its subject, this biography is both solid and enchanting. Franklin's life (1706-90) spans most of the eighteenth century, as his career took him from the periphery of Western civilization (what would one day be Pittsburgh) to its center (Versailles); as a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, he helped create that civilization's future. Brands fills in disparate pockets of history (the importance of Cotton Mather in Boston, the intellectual enthusiasms of the Royal Society in London) with readable, unobtrusive scholarship. Perhaps he took as his model his unassuming subject, who treated his extraordinary achievements in fields as diverse as science and diplomacy as if they were ordinary. Franklin emerges as a man with a passion to add to human happiness.

Arguing the World: The New York Intellectuals in Their Own Words, *by Joseph Dorman (Free Press; $25).* Like his superb documentary of the same title, Dorman's book is a mosaic portrait of four men—Irving Howe, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, and Irving Kristol—who embarked upon their careers as public intellectuals more or less together, in Alcove One of the cafeteria at City College in the late nineteen-thirties. Alcove One was where the Trotskyist and Socialist student radicals hung out, outnumbered but never out-argued by the Stalinists, in Alcove Two. Over the decades, Howe became a distinguished literary critic, founded *Dissent*, and retained to the end (he died in 1993) a commitment to democratic socialism; Bell and Glazer did pioneering and sometimes prophetic work as sociologists and are unillusioned liberals; Kristol moved steadily rightward and has ended up as a kind of neoconservative godfather. The intellectual and political world the four helped make comes to life here through their voices and those of contemporaries, like Alfred Kazin and Diana Trilling, and younger friends and adversaries, like Todd Gitlin and Tom Hayden. The result is something between "The Greatest Generation, Upper West Side Division" and "Tuesdays with Irving, Dan, Nat, and Irving."

Nowhere Else on Earth, *by Josephine Humphreys (Viking; $24.95).* Humphreys' latest novel—at once a brutal tale of the Civil War and a subtle exploration of developing American identities—is an unusual sort of epic, the great sweep of history writ small. In 1864, Rhoda Strong is a teen-ager of mixed ancestry in Scuffletown, an Indian settlement on the Lumbee River, in North Carolina. As the town's inhabitants find themselves caught between marauding Union soldiers and Confederates attempting to conscript their children for labor, Rhoda falls in love with a local outlaw who is fighting to protect the community. Humphreys has always been a master of telling a larger story through a deceptively intimate narrative, and Rhoda's tale, with its clear, distinct voice, is no exception.



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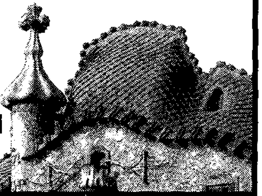

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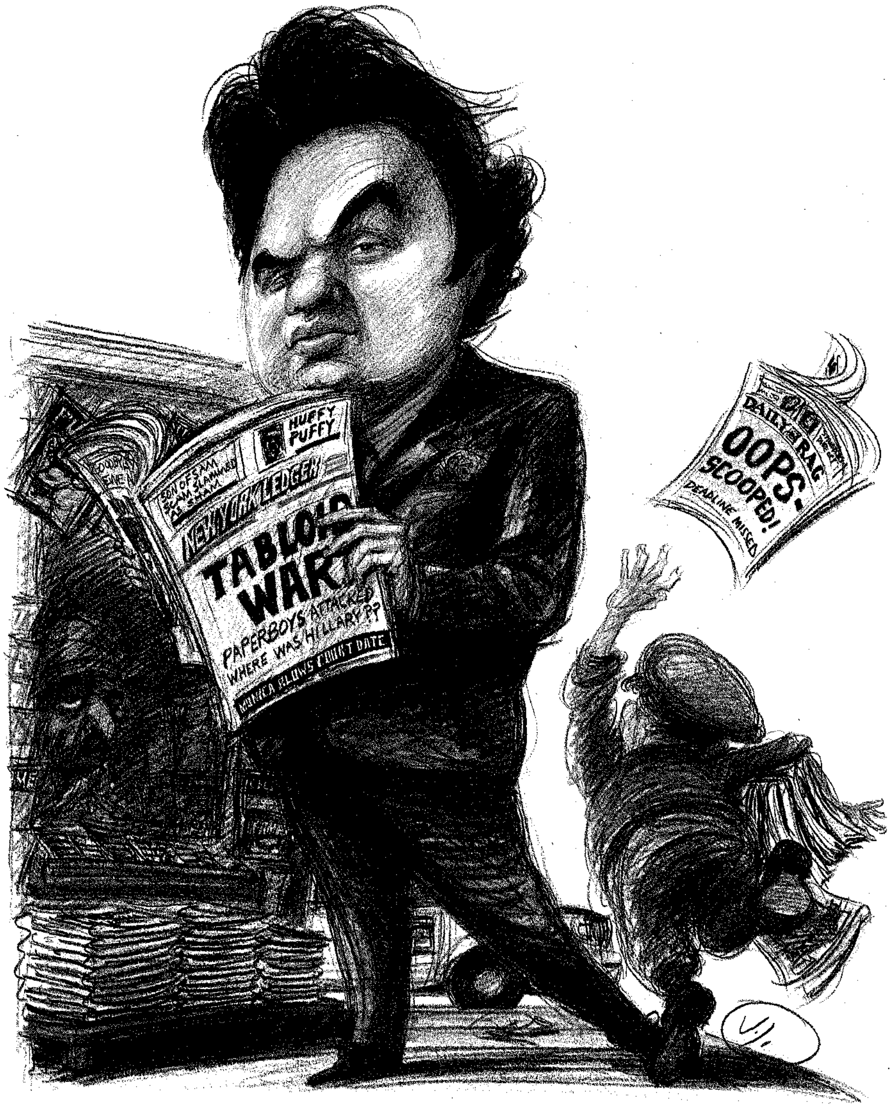
ON TELEVISION

MAKING NEWS

Two smart guys hit the headlines on Monday nights.

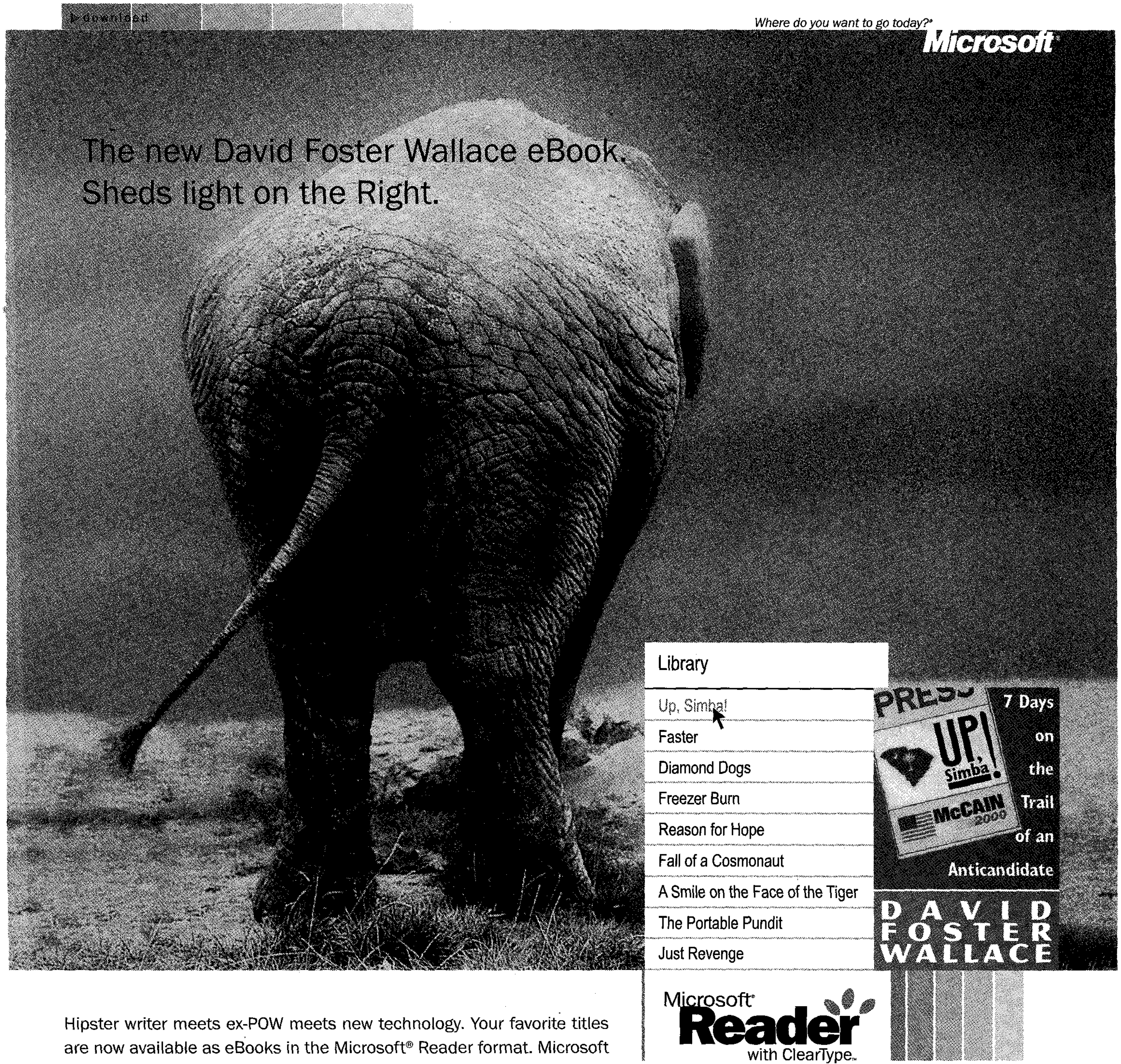
BY NANCY FRANKLIN

In NBC's ads for its new show "Ed," which popped up constantly during the network's Olympics coverage, an off-screen voice says that not only have the critics loved it but so have the "real people" who were given a look at it before the season began. No real people could be found at the office last week, so the task of writing about "Deadline," another new NBC series, fell to me. The first episode of "Deadline" didn't air until last Monday, but because it's about something close to the hearts of journalists—themselves, and their profession—and because its main character, a famous tabloid-newspaper columnist played by Oliver Platt, appears to be based primarily on the most famous tabloid-newspaper columnist of our time, and his newspaper on New York City's most (in)famous tabloid, it has received an unusually large amount of attention, of the kind that is interesting mostly (and endlessly, if we must be honest) to other members of the press. There are, as it turns out, other reasons to take note of



Oliver Platt takes it to the street as a tough-talking columnist in "Deadline."

VICTOR JUHASZ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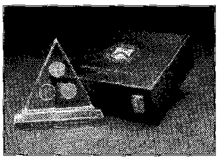

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STREET OF JEWELERS

What each one of these hundreds
Of windows did with the gold
That was melting in them this morning
I cannot begin to imagine.

I act like a prospective burglar,
Noting the ones that are open,
Their curtains drawn to the side
By someone buck naked
I may have just missed.

Here, where no one walks now,
And, when someone does, he goes softly
In the act of weighing
Specks of dust in the dying sunlight.

—*Charles Simic*

"Deadline." For starters, it was created by Dick Wolf, the man behind the ten-year-old but still solid "Law & Order," a show that has an almost addictive quality; if you land on it while channel-surfing, you tend to become glued, even if the episode is half over. (And what *is* it about that sound you hear between scenes that is so compelling?) "Deadline" also has what so far looks to be a dream cast, featuring several actors who have done memorable work in theatre and movies—Hope Davis, Lili Taylor, and Tom Conti—but are fairly fresh to television. (The one very familiar TV face belongs to Bebe Neuwirth, who plays Platt's editor, and who was, of course, a habitué of that bar where everybody knows your name.)

"Nothing but the Truth" is the name of the column that Wallace Benton (Platt) writes for the New York *Ledger*, but in the pilot episode he discovers that a series of columns he wrote two years earlier about a mass murder at a fast-food restaurant—and for which he won the Pulitzer Prize—may have been direly inaccurate, and partly responsible for the fact that the men convicted of the crime are now on death row. And they are to be executed in three days! The plot eerily mirrors a real-life crime that took place at a Wendy's in Queens earlier this year, when five employees were killed (the script was apparently written before the Wendy's massacre), but the beat-the-clock device echoes the situation in that old newspaper classic "The Front Page" and its remake "His Girl Friday." (And just so there's no mistake about the parallel, "Deadline" even has a character named Hildy—a gossip columnist, played by Taylor.) "Deadline" has ink on its fingers, but it has greasepaint on its face; its mixture of serious, issue-oriented themes and comedy stemming from the personal quirks of the characters recalls a long line of news-room dramatizations. The hard-drinking, tough-talking Benton fits right into the tradition—as Platt has characterized him, he's a "big-ego, big-city columnist who has a very strong desire to insert himself into the story." In the pilot, he virtually blackmails one of the convicts by threatening to print lies in his column, warning him, "It *is* the truth, if that's the way I write it."

Platt is terrific in the role. A big man with a rumpled, expressive face, he excels, as Walter Matthau did, at playing gruff, self-absorbed characters who are improbably easy to love. There are stereotypes galore in this show, and howling implausibilities—in the second episode, when Nikki, Benton's editor, stupidly harbors a fugitive in her apartment, she stupidly says, "What are they going to do to me?"—but the writing for Benton is punchy and funny, and Platt gives the part a fleshy, hard-to-resist force that enables him to get away with rampant po-

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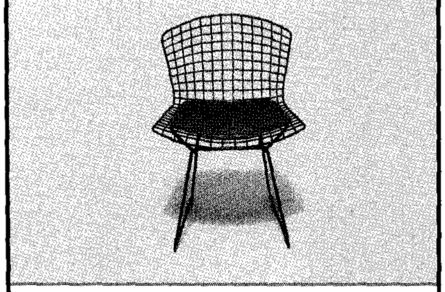

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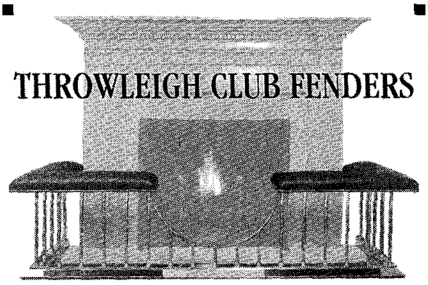

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litical and personal incorrectness. (When Benton's doorman tells him that his estranged wife is up in his apartment, he says, "Is she wearing a mask and carrying a gunnysack?") He has some great little moments, such as when he's fed a piece of usable dirt on someone and reacts with childlike, Christmas-morning glee. Although the show has been taken to task for its lack of verisimilitude, it gets one thing right: that the work journalists do is driven at least as much by personality as it is by principle.

"Monday Night Football"—which "Deadline" is up against—has been an ABC fixture for three decades, but fans, as some of them have told me, have not always liked the combination of commentators on the show. The golden years—and I use that term without sentimentality, since for me the definition of a golden year is a year in which I don't have to watch any football on TV—were, I gather, way back in the seventies, when Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, and Howard Cosell sat in the booth exchanging the badinage and the bromides (and, in the case of Cosell, the bombast) that are the core elements of sports broadcasting. At this point, it seems clear that "Monday Night Football" will be around as long as the sun regardless of who's doing the announcing, but the king of the sports jungle is not the energetic beast it used to be. It has direct competition on Monday nights from TNT's World Championship Wrestling spectacle, and it faces the pressure of a growing taste, among younger viewers, for extreme sports. In February, a joint venture of NBC and the World Wrestling Federation called the XFL—the X is for "extreme"—will begin playing televised games on Saturday nights, and the league's goal, according to NBC, is to "connect with fans by returning football to its tougher roots and the wide-open way it was played in the '60s and '70s." Life for sports doctors is about to get even better.

This year, in an effort to sharpen the edge of its Monday mainstay, ABC put the Mensa-minded, irony-impacted comedian Dennis Miller in its announcing lineup, alongside the veteran Al Michaels and the former San Diego Chargers quarterback Dan Fouts. (Speaking of bromides, shortly after a touchdown in the first game of the season, Fouts commented, "Well, if the Broncos are not going to tackle, the Rams are going to score.") Miller was, to say the least, a surprising choice for the job, but he may be just the thing. He is both irritating and very likable—a know-it-all, but one who's paradoxically full of curiosity and enthusiasm. He didn't have much to say in the season opener, but with each game he seems to get more of a kick out of just being there. Toward the end of the third game, he said to his colleagues, "I ran into Sonny Jurgensen outside the booth at halftime—which, by the way, is the hippest sentence I'll ever utter."

Miller's one-liners—his many-claused, multi-metaphored sentences barely fit the confines of the term—are always smart; that's what he's known for. But there's also something delightfully irrational and transgressive about the way his mind works; it's as though someone had turned a leaf blower on in a library. Commenting on the interconnections between the Patriots and the Jets, he said, "I haven't seen murkier bloodlines than this since the House of Plantagenet," and soon afterward he made more or less apt—apt but *weird*—references to Elston Howard, the Yankee of yore, and Dick Fosbury, the high jumper who originated the technique known as the Fosbury flop. In the next game, when a town called Sisters, Oregon, came into the conversation, he said, "That's near Vera-Ellen and Ro Clooney, isn't it?" (If you don't get this, you don't know your movie musicals.) And then he compared the expectations the Redskins' owner has for his team to those of Bruce Ismay, the head of the White Star Line, who wanted the Titanic to go faster. Whew! Diehards might point out that none of this has anything to do with football, but that's what Michaels and Fouts are for; Miller's job is to bring a "Saturday Night Live" audience to Monday nights. Maybe he can do that. Or maybe not—while Miller isn't exactly an old fogy (he'll be forty-seven next month), his history-conscious hipness places him squarely in the old school. And no matter how good he is, it would take a lot more than a smart, funny guy to make some of us change our answer to the question asked in the head-banging theme song at the beginning of every game: "Are you ready for some football?" ♦

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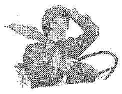

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BEYOND SONDHEIM

“The Ballad of Little Jo” bushwhacks its way toward a new American musical.

BY JOHN LAHR

Between a rock and a hard place: Josephine Monaghan went to Idaho in search of the American dream, and her gritty, complicated story makes for a compelling drama.

TOM BACHTELL

For a long time now, Broadway musicals’ grosses have been at odds with their quality. Profits are higher—last year, Broadway shows took in around six hundred and three million dollars, and substantially more on the road—but, with a few exceptions, the musicals are not better. This may be the only billion-dollar industry that does no significant research and development; with so many eager pockets to pick, producers see no need to change. Revivals and movie-inspired replicas abound—a sure sign both of the genre’s decadence and of its narrative impasse. In the old days, when the musical saw itself as a business rather than an art, the prevailing credo was “No girls, no gags, no chance”; nowadays, thanks to the influence of Stephen Sondheim and his less talented imitators, it might as well be “No plot, no relationship, no succès d’estime.” Caught between the banality of corporate-sponsored shows and the dead end of unpopular deconstructions, the form has lost its way: it doesn’t know how or what to celebrate. How are ambitious new musicals going to get produced and disseminated in such a timid, reactionary climate? How can the nation’s most influential theatrical form reinvent itself?

Enter Steppenwolf, the vivacious Chicago theatre, which in its twenty-five years has launched such talented actors as John Malkovich, Gary Sinise, Joan Allen, and Glenne Headly, and is now launching its first musical, “The Ballad of Little Jo,” by Mike Reid and Sarah Schlesinger, whose world première opens the company’s silver-anniversary season. The theatre’s red neon marquee, which is missing a couple of vowels, blinks “STEPP NW LF”: into the night like some parody of a Broadway fun palace, but, inside, “The Ballad of Little Jo” turns out to be the real thing—the best piece of musical storytelling I’ve seen in a decade. It is a show that probes the complexity of the heart with song, *melodious* and *literate* song, a show that evokes an American place and time and moral outlook, and is, finally, neither a stroll down memory lane nor a smug exercise in through-sung palaver but, instead, a compelling drama.

“Little Jo,” which covers the expansionist period in American history between 1867 and 1883, reimagines the life of Josephine Monaghan, who came West from Boston and spent most of her fifty-three years in Silver City, Idaho, as a man called Jo. Full of roiling melancholy and romantic elation, the musical departs from the 1993 Maggie Greenwald film of the same name to tap into the rich, dark vein of American history and the deep well of folk forms (the gospel hymn, the field song, the Appalachian clog dance). The composer, Mike Reid, began his professional life as a defensive tackle for the Cincinnati Bengals. He is now a Grammy Award-winning songwriter with more than thirty top-ten hits and a genuine gift for distinctive melody. The score has a refreshing, muscular grace and passion, and Sarah Schlesinger’s subtle lyrics sit perfectly on Reid’s notes. The show’s inspiration is not Central Park West but the Western heartland. “The days have turned shorter / The berries are falling,” the Silver City mining community sings, in a verse from the rousing anthem “To Winter.” “Like tiny red footprints / They mark the first snow.”

The landscape plays a role not only in the language of “Little Jo” ’s song but also in the look of the production. The palette is the grays and browns of a rocky, rough-hewn Idaho. Water surges down mining sluices constructed before our eyes; pickaxes gouge through real gravel; the stage floor is covered with earth. But there’s no gee-whizzery in the Reid-Schlesinger view of the American West. The gritty story of Josephine Monaghan raises questions of gender confusion, racism, and political and social oppression, and, at the same time, manages to be a damn good yarn. Leaving her illegitimate son with her sister, the seventeen-year-old Josephine (Judy Kuhn) sets out to claim her piece of the American dream. But no sooner has she left Boston, her mind racing with images of the West as an American Eden (“Skyblue waters / Prairie breezes / Silver on the ground / Endless riches / Waiting to be found,” she sings), than she comes smack up against the hell of frontier lawlessness. Her train ticket is stolen; she is raped; then she murders the rapist, in self-defense, and scars herself, out of self-loathing. Next, in order to save her skin and her soul, she cuts off her hair and impersonates a man. When she tries to reclaim her child, her sister refuses to surrender him, and Josephine's temporary impersonation hardens into a shell. She kills off both her heart and her female identity. She becomes Jo. Her journey to the West turns out to be not a resurrection of the self but a lifelong retreat from it. It's a metaphor that brilliantly captures one of the most confounding spiritual conundrums of our mobile democracy—a force that, Tocqueville said, threatens to confine the American "entirely within the solitude of his own heart." Jo reinvents herself all right, but her new identity is a lonely lie.

In Idaho, she becomes the business partner and confidant of Jordan Ellis (the compelling David New), whose restless wife, Sara (Jessica Boevers), is unsatisfied by their marriage of convenience. Charmed by Jo's sensitivity, she confesses to Jordan, "I married you because Jo didn't want me." Jo becomes the focus of a fascinating emotional triangle. But the person who finally breaks through Jo's carapace is a Chinese coolie named Tin Man Wong. A low-waged foreigner, he is scapegoated by the community when it hits hard times, and he seeks refuge in Jo's house. It takes an outcast to know an outcast; Wong (the excellent Jose Llana) intuits Jo's secret and, in a seamless, surprising moment, breaks through to her feminine self. As Kuhn undresses in front of him, singing in a limpid and poignant voice that makes every vowel and consonant register, Jo's masculine façade disappears before our eyes:

Unbuttoning the buttons
Unbuttoning the years
Unbuttoning the longings
The flood of unwept tears.

Jo and Tin Man are eventually murdered by the mob. She materializes at the finale in the form of a letter to her son, which turns her failed life into a lesson. "Love the children you will someday have so completely for who they are that you erase all memory of how those of us who came before you have failed," she tells him. And, in that beat, Josephine opens for her son (and for us) the path to blessing that she was unable to find in her own hard journey.

Although "The Ballad of Little Jo" is directed with a strong, imaginative hand by Tina Landau, it bears the limitations of Landau's avant-garde pedigree. At least three of the songs—"To Winter," "Independence!," and "Idaho!"—cry out for better choreography, but G. W. Mercier's set constricts the possibilities of movement. The cast is blocked by countless logs, ruts, rocks, and campfires, and this ultimately inhibits the show's kinetic and scenic potential. Landau, who co-wrote, with Adam Guettel, and directed the superb "Floyd Collins," a musical about a man trapped in a cave, has painted herself into this corner before. She is under the misapprehension that movement will trivialize the gravity of the piece, and that her groupings are somehow a rebellion against conventional Broadway choreography. It would be wrong to give "The Ballad of Little Jo" any touch of the Agnes de Mille "Ev'rythin's up to date in Kansas City" hoopla, but it is also wrong not to open the show up and invest it with more choreographed fun and social observation.

"The Ballad of Little Jo" is not so much flawed as it is unfinished. It needs a new set, new choreography, and perhaps a little raising of the sexual stakes in the romantic subplots. As surgery goes, this is not major stuff. The musical should find its way to New York, probably to Off Broadway, but it's important that venues like Steppenwolf remain willing to form a circuit for this kind of ambitious project. In Chicago, the critics gave "The Ballad of Little Jo" mixed reviews. They were wrong. It's true that the current cast isn't vocally up to the score and that the acting is uneven, but the musical itself is exceptionally powerful and well made. It could be a watershed, marking the return of the musical to narrative, to meaning, and, therefore, to joy—but with a difference. It's my hunch that Reid, Schlesinger, and Landau are among the élite corps of the next generation's musical innovators. "The Ballad of Little Jo" imposes on musical dramaturgy not just seriousness—which was Sondheim's achievement—but a mature vision, in which barbarity and blessing can coexist onstage as they do in life. ♦

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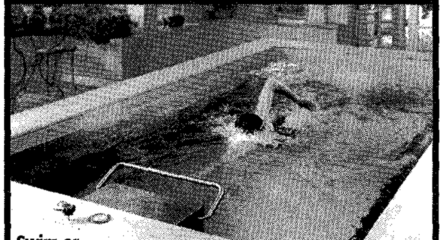

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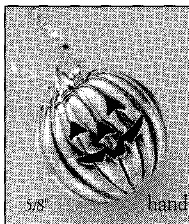

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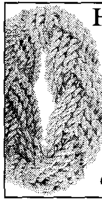

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

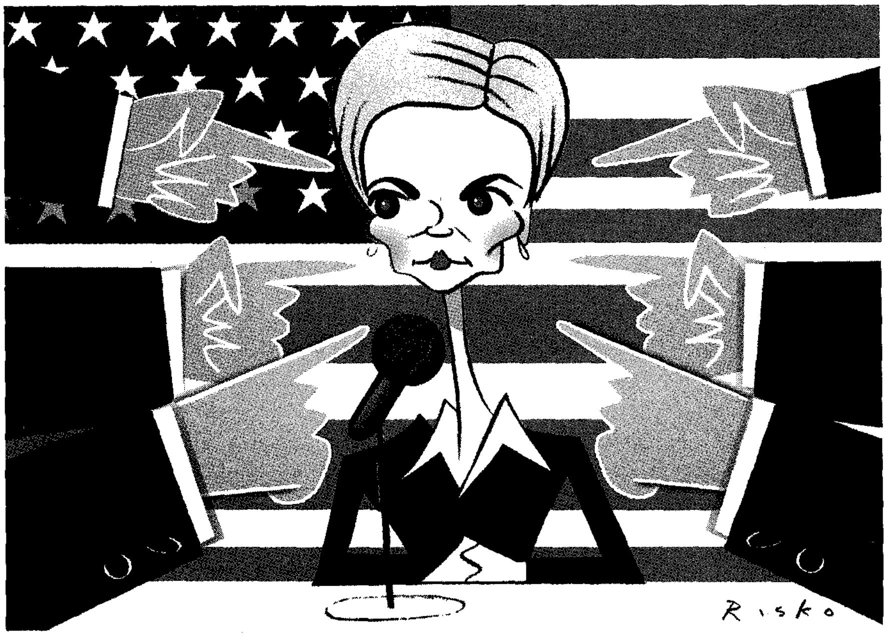
SEX AND TROUBLE

Another White House scandal and Robert Altman's Dallas tale.

BY DAVID DENBY

In "The Contender," a new thriller about scandal and power in Washington, Jeff Bridges, as President Jackson Evans, combines a little of Bill Clinton with a great deal of Lyndon B. Johnson. A big man who likes to eat, Evans is alarmingly mobile; he swivels and pivots like a Baptist preacher in mid-sermon, runs his large hands through his hair, and then lays those meat hooks on anyone who comes within ten feet of him. This President gives good massage. Like many powerful people, Evans uses friendliness strategically—he would rather intimidate with warmth than with threats, a characteristic oddly known in the great world as charm. Evans's good cheer can be frightening, and he can turn against people in an instant. Jeff Bridges works his big grin and vulcanizes his strong body, and he's enormous fun to watch; he's acting a man who is himself gleefully acting the role of President, a dangerous and complicated fellow who uses affability to disguise his true purpose and who may, or may not, be good at heart.

At the end of his second term, Evans, a Democrat, is worried about his legacy, and when the Vice-President dies suddenly he nominates a liberal woman senator to take the job. Laine Hanson (Joan Allen) was elected as a Republican, but she changed parties, and she has earned the hostility of the moralizing Representative Shelly Runyon (Gary Oldman), Republican of Illinois, who is also the President's enemy. Runyon has a fearsome weapon to use against Hanson—some pictures of her participating in a frat-house orgy when she was a freshman in college. Hanson, however, stonily refuses to answer his questions about the incident. She's the proud, silent victim here, not a saint but a normal woman who has to suffer the implication that she's a whore, and Allen gives a sturdy but muted performance. Since Hanson won't fight for herself, the struggle rages between the President and Runyon, who, in the person of the English actor Oldman, is a strangely resonant creation—bony, balding, physically mediocre in every way, but with a dour firepower that never lets up.



Joan Allen plays a Vice-Presidential nominee under attack in "The Contender."

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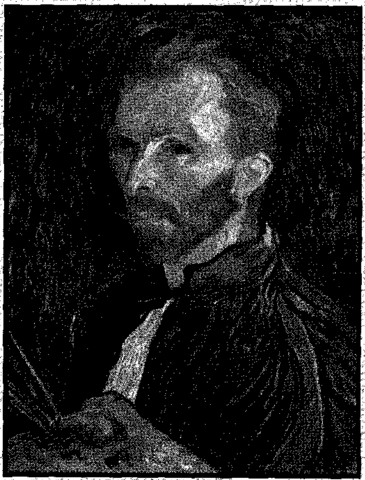

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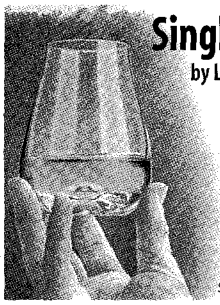

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"The Contender," which was written and directed by Rod Lurie, alters a key element from the Lewinsky affair—it's a female politician who is damaged by sexual scandal—but the inquisitorial Runyon is clearly meant to remind us of impeachment players like Bob Barr, Bill McCollum, and the other Republican congressmen who thrust the spear of sanctimony into Bill Clinton's gut. Oldman, who has been sulfurous in other roles, brings out this man's square, dogged, weirdly potent rectitude. His Runyon tells everyone that he won't confirm someone merely because she's a woman, a high-minded sentiment that prevents him from realizing how much he hates Hanson precisely because she is a woman. Oldman's accent is an expert approximation of Midwestern flatness—a hard-pressing drone—and he barely permits himself a smile. His Runyon hasn't the faintest notion that he's a blackmailing scoundrel.

"The Contender" is good, juicy fun—more vivid and entertaining than such overtly funny Presidential satires as "Dave" and "Dick." In democratic politics, you have to settle for tricking, seducing, or humiliating your opponent when you really want to kill him or throw him in jail, and Rod Lurie knows that the containment of open violence can liberate bad manners. If Lurie's name seems slightly familiar, that's because he was once a film critic of sorts, the kind of critic who spreads praise far and wide and who then asks famous actors to appear on his radio show—clearly a man who knows a thing or two about politics. But if Lurie's hack-journalistic practice opened the way to his becoming a director, no one could now say that his opportunism has misfired. He has assembled a first-rate group of actors and written good roles for them. Sam Elliott, of the gravelly, drawling voice, is on hand as a domineering Presidential adviser; Christian Slater, playing a young congressman with an eye for the main chance, noses into a room like a cat looking for the Friskies bowl. There isn't a dull scene in the movie.

Lurie, though a natural-born entertainer, is still a little unsure of himself, and here and there his writing becomes overexplicit and stentorian; the Washington settings are clichéd and TV-ish, and Lurie tends to jam the camera into the actors' faces. At times, the movie is ham-handed, but better this kind of ham than the kind that turns every plot difficulty into a

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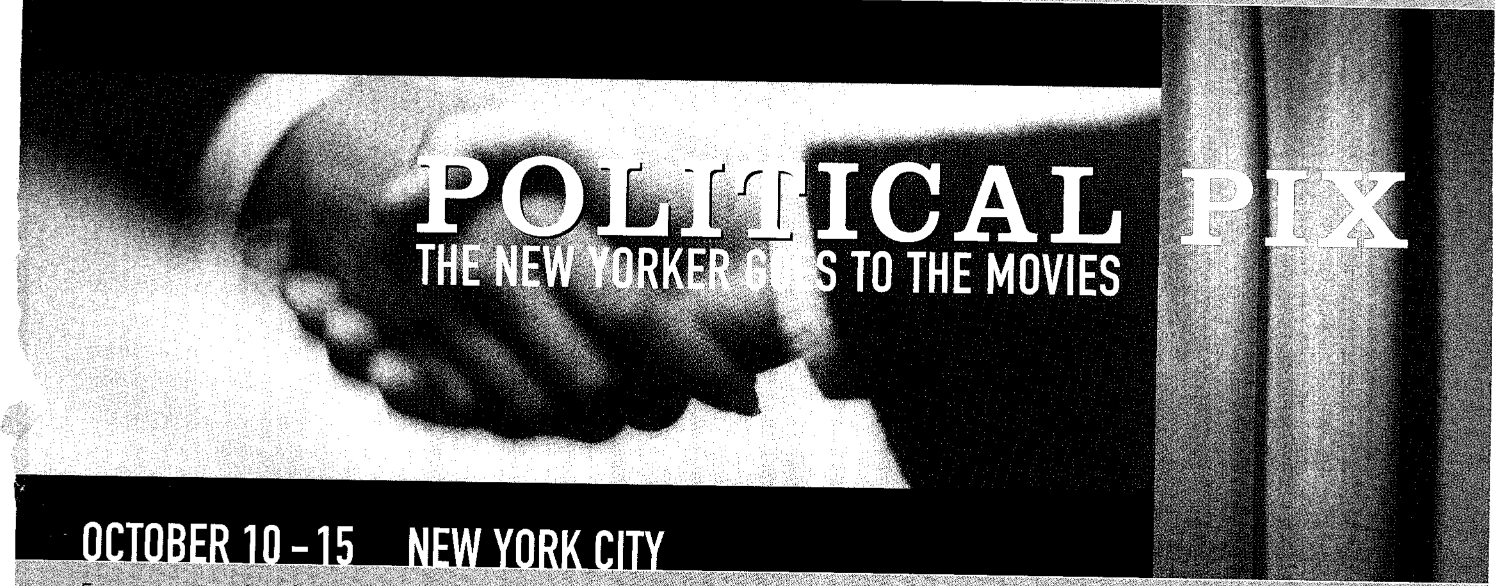

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From provocative documentaries covering the campaign trail to classic thrillers about the Cold War, Political Pix offers timely perspective. With on-screen appearances by JFK, Richard Nixon, Stalin, Ollie North, Huey Long, Joseph McCarthy, and others, this cinematic campaign stop is slated for the home stretch of the Presidential race.

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SCHEDULE

Primary (1960)
This classic political documentary chronicles the heated 1960 Wisconsin Democratic primary between John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey.
Oct. 10 at 1 PM; Oct. 11 at 10 PM

A Perfect Candidate (1996)
Entertaining documentary about Oliver North's unsuccessful 1994 bid for a US Senate seat.
Oct. 10 at 2:20 PM; Oct. 13 at 9:35 PM

A Lion Is in the Streets (1953)
James Cagney, in a Huey Long take-off, as a swamp peddler turned politician.
Oct. 11 at 2 and 6 PM

All the King's Men (1949)
A brilliant adaptation of Robert Penn Warren's Pulitzer Prize–winning novel about the rise and fall of a Huey Long–like senator.
Oct. 11 at 3:50 and 7:50 PM

The Confession (1970)
Based on a classic Stalinist show trial, The Confession tells the story of Czech Communist Arthur London and his unjustified 1951 purge trial for treason.
Oct. 12 at 1 PM; Oct. 14 at 8:30 PM

Secret Honor (1984)
Philip Baker Hall's Richard Nixon paces about his study in near-psychotic rage against his perceived enemies. Adapted by Robert Altman from the one-man stage show.
Oct. 12 at 3:45 and 7:35 PM

Point of Order (1964)
Compiled from TV footage, this documentary chronicles the 36-day hearings of Joseph McCarthy's 1954 Communist witch hunt.
Oct. 12 at 5:40 and 9:30 PM

Salt of the Earth (1954)
A taut drama-documentary about striking New Mexico mine workers that earned the film's producer, director, screenwriter, and star a spot on the Hollywood blacklist.
Oct. 13 at 1 and 5:20 PM

My Son John (1952)
Archetypal apple-pie parents (Helen Hayes, Dean Jagger) suspect their son (Robert Walker) of Communist leanings.
Oct. 13 at 3 and 7:15 PM

Join us for the US premiere of two provocative films produced by FABRICA, the creative arts laboratory funded by Benetton.

Moloch (1999, FABRICA)
An ironic and eerie portrait of Hitler, Eva Braun, and company during a weekend at Berchtesgaden.
Oct. 14 at 4:30 PM

Seventeen Years (1999, FABRICA)
This Zhang Yuan film tells the tale of a woman who reunites with her family after a 17-year sentence for murder.
Oct. 14 at 6:40 PM

The Battle of Chile (1977)
Patricio Guzmán's epic three-part chronicle of Chile's peaceful socialist revolution and violent counter-revolution.
Oct. 15 at 4:30 PM

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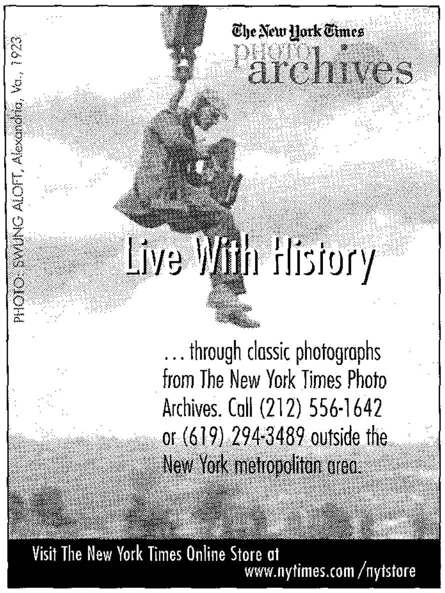

PHOTO: SWUNG ALOFT, Alexandria, Va., 1923

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special-effects triumph. Lurie, to his credit, loves old-fashioned complex intrigue and its nearly forgotten handmaiden, suspense. The movie begins with a very strange event—a Democratic governor (William Petersen), who is also a possible choice for the Vice-Presidency, is out fishing with a journalist when an automobile goes flying off a bridge above the governor's head and plunges into the water. The governor tries, and fails, to save a young woman trapped inside the car. This event—vaguely reminiscent of Chappaquiddick—disqualifies him from the nomination. The event plays back later in the movie in ways that lead to a satisfying series of surprises.

Only one thing goes seriously wrong for Lurie. Laine Hanson is gallant and composed, an accused woman standing on her dignity—a noble conception, but also a humorless one. Joan Allen has been brilliant as Pat Nixon and other repressed characters, but now she's finally playing a full-blooded woman, and damned if she doesn't have to be repressed all over again. With her level stare, she comes across as a person of great intelligence and pride. But she's not convincing as a politician (a law-school dean, maybe, but not a senator). After all, even liberal martyrs have to play the game now and then, schmoozing and flattering and propitiating. Without meaning to, Lurie has sacrificed a good actress to principle; his treatment of Hanson introduces a note of unnecessary solemnity into what is otherwise the most entertaining political movie in years.

In Robert Altman's "Dr. T & the Women," Dallas seems to be the town that feminism forgot. Dressed to the nines, in billowing capes and fur chokers and huge, drooping hats, hordes of chattering upper-class women rush about the city, flitting through fancy stores and wedding parties, drinks in hand, and when they have nothing else to do, which is often, they storm the office of their gynecologist, Dr. T. (Richard Gere), a handsome and masterly practitioner who treats them as goddesses. The women just can't get enough of Dr. T.; they imagine themselves ill so they have a reason to go to his office and spread themselves out for him. At the center of the movie is a not-so-veiled dirty joke: Dr. T. has such gentle hands that an office visit is close to sex for these women—though, unlike Warren Beatty's George, the hairdresser in "Shampoo" who sleeps with all his clients, the good doctor is actually a straight arrow who's faithful to his wife. At first, the movie seems to be an amiable, whirligig farce about a man who sugars women, and the women who love him in return. Altman works with his customary fluid tracking shots, his camera picking up one of the women as she enters the office, following her to the reception desk, dropping her for someone else, picking her up again, and so on. To our surprise, however, everything falls apart for Dr. T.—his wife (Farrah Fawcett) strips off her clothes in a mall and fades into a loony bin, his daughters fall into turmoil, and the doctor throws himself into the arms of an independent woman (Helen Hunt) who doesn't want much of anything from him. "Dr. T" concerns little of importance, yet it develops a strangely apocalyptic tone. There are recurring rainstorms, including a real humdinger at the end, in which everything but the frogs from "Magnolia" drops from the Texas sky, and Dallas gets cleansed (I suppose). But by that time the movie itself has fallen apart. Altman and his screenwriter, Anne Rapp, develop their material carelessly, and their point of view is obscure. As Richard Gere plays Dr. T., he seems to be a decent enough guy. Are we meant to think he gets punished because he's been infantilizing all these women—that the whole mess is his fault? Some of the women are so giddy that they seem to have stepped out of an Almodóvar comedy, but with this crucial difference—Almodóvar loves women and Altman, from the evidence of this film and others, such as "The Player," does not. There is an aura of condescension hanging over "Dr. T & the Women," and it sours one's pleasure in the director's skill long before the movie is over. ♦

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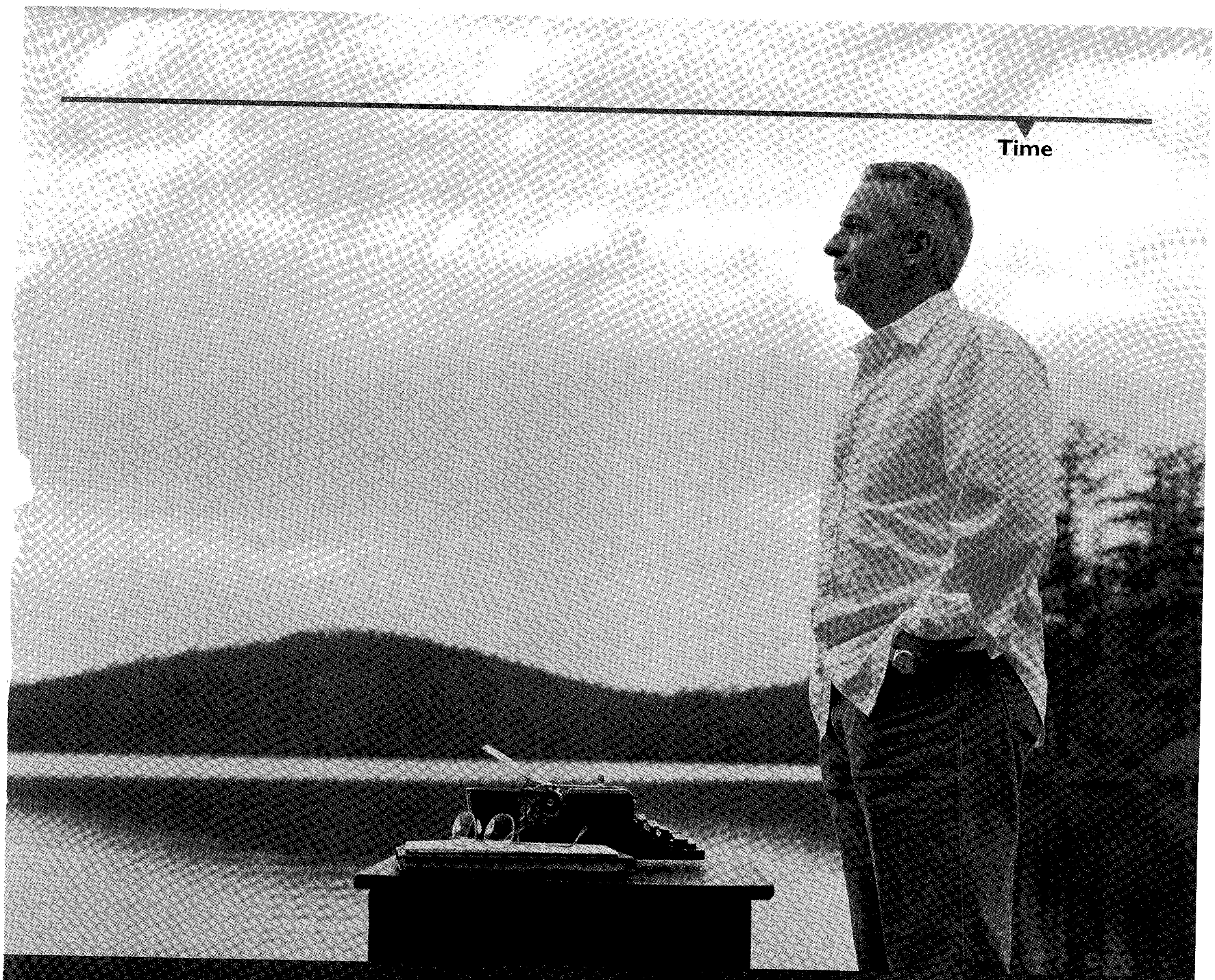

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THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL SLANSKY

CAMPAIGN QUIZ 2000

1. Who claimed that euthanasia is so out of control in Holland that the Dutch are killing people for their hospital beds?
   a) Pat Buchanan
   b) Ralph Nader
   c) Steve Forbes
   d) Elizabeth Dole

2. To what did Bill Bradley attribute his irregular heartbeats?
   a) Keeping too much bottled up inside.
   b) Not getting enough exercise.
   c) Drinking too much cream soda.
   d) Al Gore's aggressive debate tactics.

Which candidate did what?

3. Alan Keyes
4. John McCain
5. George W. Bush
6. Al Gore
7. Gary Bauer
8. Joseph Lieberman
9. Donald Trump
10. Dick Cheney

a) Fell off a platform while trying to catch a flapjack.

b) Paid a woman to tell him to wear brown clothes.

c) Said that his leap into a mosh pit was an example of his "trust in people."

d) Said, "I think the only difference between me and the other candidates is that I'm more honest and my women are more beautiful."

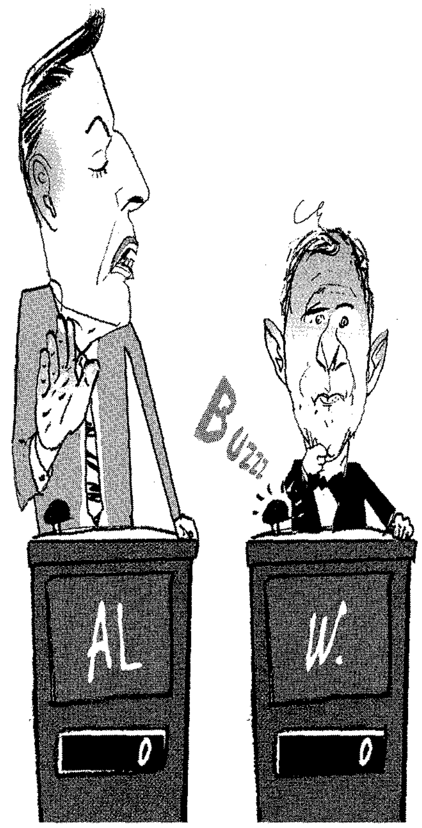
e) Mentioned God so much on the campaign trail that the Anti-Defamation League asked him to stop.

f) Explained that his reference to Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson as "forces of evil" was meant as a "joke."

g) Referred to Greek citizens as Grecians.

h) Cited reporters' questions about his voting record as examples of the media's obsession with "trivia."

11. Who, while interviewing Pat Buchanan, said, "Gore—surging ahead in the polls. If he maintains his lead, will he win over Bush?"
   a) Dan Rather
   b) Bill O'Reilly
   c) Chris Matthews
   d) Bernard Shaw



ISTVAN BANYAI

12. Complete this quote by Ron Reagan: "The big elephant sitting in the corner is that George W. Bush is simply unqualified for the job. What is his accomplishment?
   a) That he decided that he would never again brand someone with a hot metal coat hanger?"
   b) That he managed to stonewall the media on the coke thing?"
   c) That he's learned not to make fun of people he's executed?"
   d) That he's no longer an obnoxious drunk?"

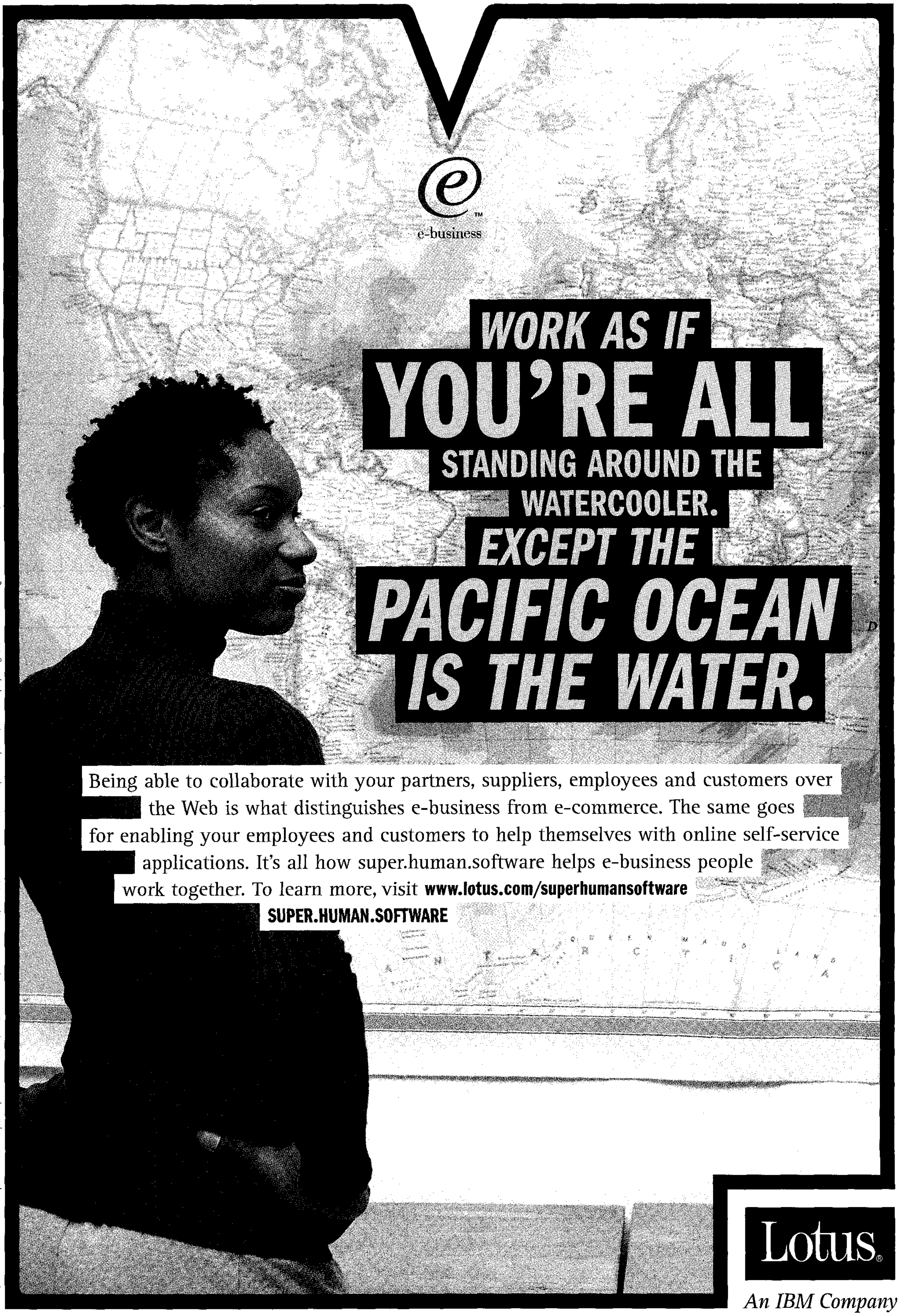
13. Complete this quote by the *Times* columnist Gail Collins: "If Dan Quayle looked like a deer caught in the headlights when he was in front of the cameras, Mr. Bush sometimes resembles
   a) a proud lion, fiercely defending his positions as if they were his cubs."
   b) a salmon struggling to swim upstream."
   c) a raccoon pawing through the empties behind the frat house."
   d) a possum cornered in the garage—hunched over, tense, eyes darting worriedly."

14. Who introduced George W. Bush at a campaign rally with this anecdote: "At one of these governors' conferences, George turns to me and says, 'What are they talking about?' I said, 'I don't know.' He said, 'You don't know a thing, do you?' And I said, 'Not one thing.' He said, 'Neither do I.' And we kind of high-fived"?
   a) New Mexico Governor Gary E. Johnson
   b) Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura
   c) Florida Governor Jeb Bush
   d) Former Virginia Governor George Allen

15. What did Al Gore *not* try to take credit for?
   a) Creating the Internet.
   b) Providing the inspiration for the Ryan O'Neal character in "Love Story."
   c) Cleaning up the Love Canal.
   d) Arranging a fund-raiser at a Buddhist temple.

16. True or false? Of the twenty million dollars that Dick Cheney made over the past ten years, he gave only two per cent to charity.

ANSWERS:
(1) c, (2) c, (3) c, (4) f, (5) g, (6) b, (7) a, (8) e, (9) d, (10) h, (11) d, (12) d, (13) d, (14) a, (15) d, (16) False; he gave one per cent. ♦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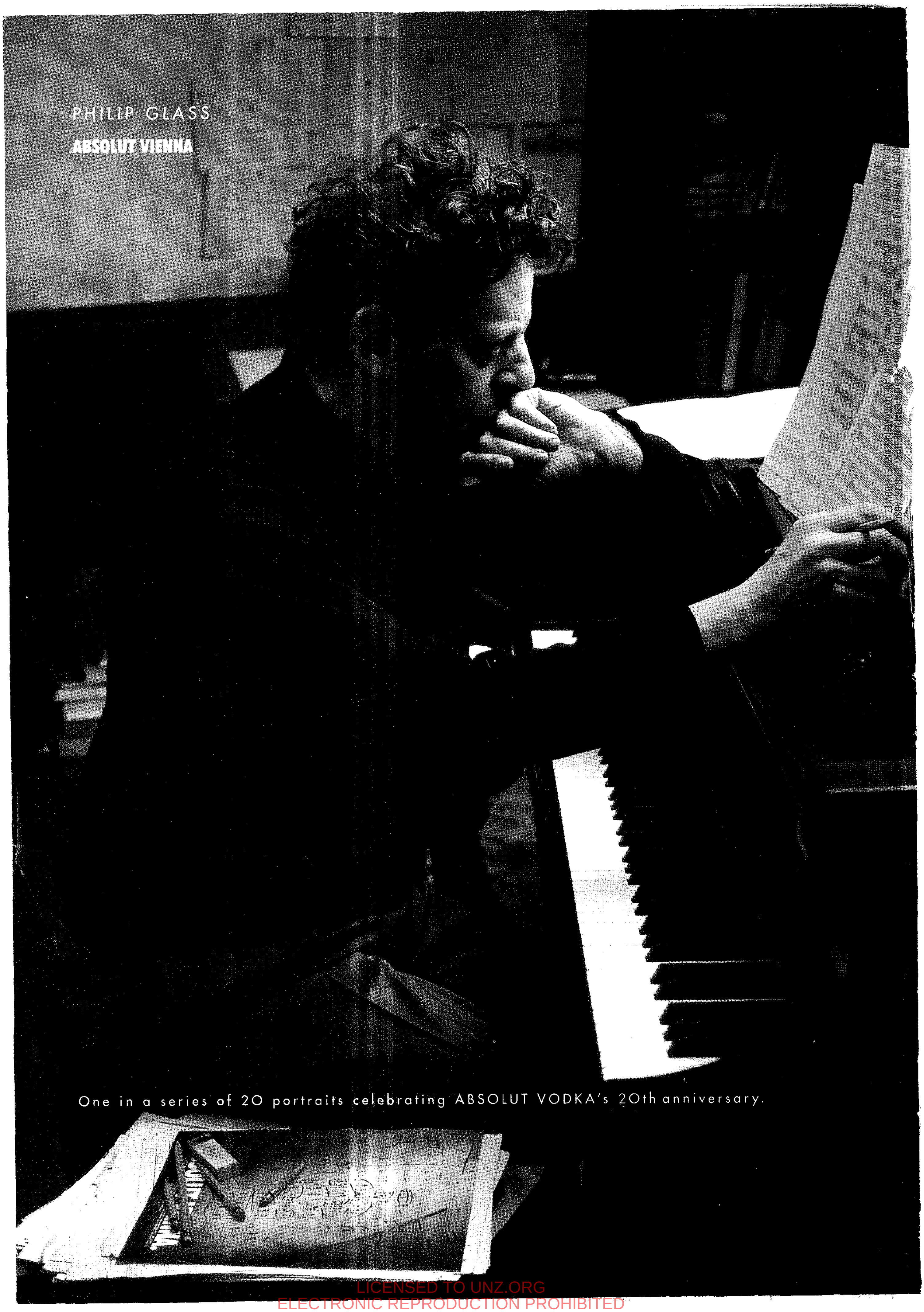

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